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## **New Critical Essays on 'Love's Labour's Lost'**

Laetitia Sansonetti, Yan Brailowsky, Sophie Chiari, Line Cottegnies, Dulac Anne-Valérie, Denis Lagae-Devoldere, Sophie Lemerancier-Goddard, Anne-Marie Miller-Blaise, Ladan Niayesh, Michèle Vignaux

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## Nouvelles lectures de *Love's Labour's Lost*

*New Critical Essays on Love's Labour's Lost*

Laetitia Sansonetti, Yan Brailowsky, Sophie Chiari, Line Cottegnies, Anne-Valérie Dulac, Denis Lagae-Devoldere, Sophie Lemerrier-Goddard, Anne-Marie Miller-Blaise, Ladan Niayesh and Michèle Vignaux (dir.)

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# Le point de vue des éditeurs

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# The Wars of *Love's Labour's Lost*: Performance and Interpretation

William C. Carroll

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I begin with an entry from the diary of the German novelist Thomas Mann, writing in Pacific Palisades, California on 18 May 1943. Mann is reflecting on the latest news and relating his own activities on that day: “All Europe in invasion fever. Preparations of the French underground organization. Announcement of general strike. The garrison in Norway is instructed to fight ‘to the last man’[...]. In Africa 200,000 prisoners were taken. [...] Expectation of the invasion of Italy. Undertakings against Sardinia and Sicily are in the offing. [...] In the evening read *Love's Labour's Lost*.”<sup>1</sup> The apparent discrepancy between the chaos of the European war – prisoners taken, invasion fever, underground resistance – and *this* Shakespeare play is at first glance stunning. If it had been *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, or *Coriolanus*, then the associations with apocalypse, madness and tyranny, and totalitarian rule would have been clear, yet these plays are never mentioned in this period of his diary. But *Love's Labour's Lost* of course is central to Thomas Mann's novel *Dr. Faustus*, as the central character in the novel composes an opera based on *Love's Labour's Lost* early in his career. Mann's novel was begun, and it begins, five days after the diary entry I read, on 23 May 1943.<sup>2</sup>

I invoke Thomas Mann here because the conjunction in his thinking of desperate world events on the one hand, and on the other the play that George Bernard Shaw called “a sunny, joyous, and delightful play” seems contradictory, even perverse.<sup>3</sup> Yet the modern critical and production histories of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* do in fact reflect an increasingly dark interpretation of the play and a belief that its aesthetic can, at least in part, be understood as associated with death and violence, even explicitly with war. The current production by the Royal Shakespeare Company, directed by Christopher Luscombe, includes a pairing with a play they are dubiously calling “*Love’s Labour’s Won* [also known as *Much Ado About Nothing*]”.

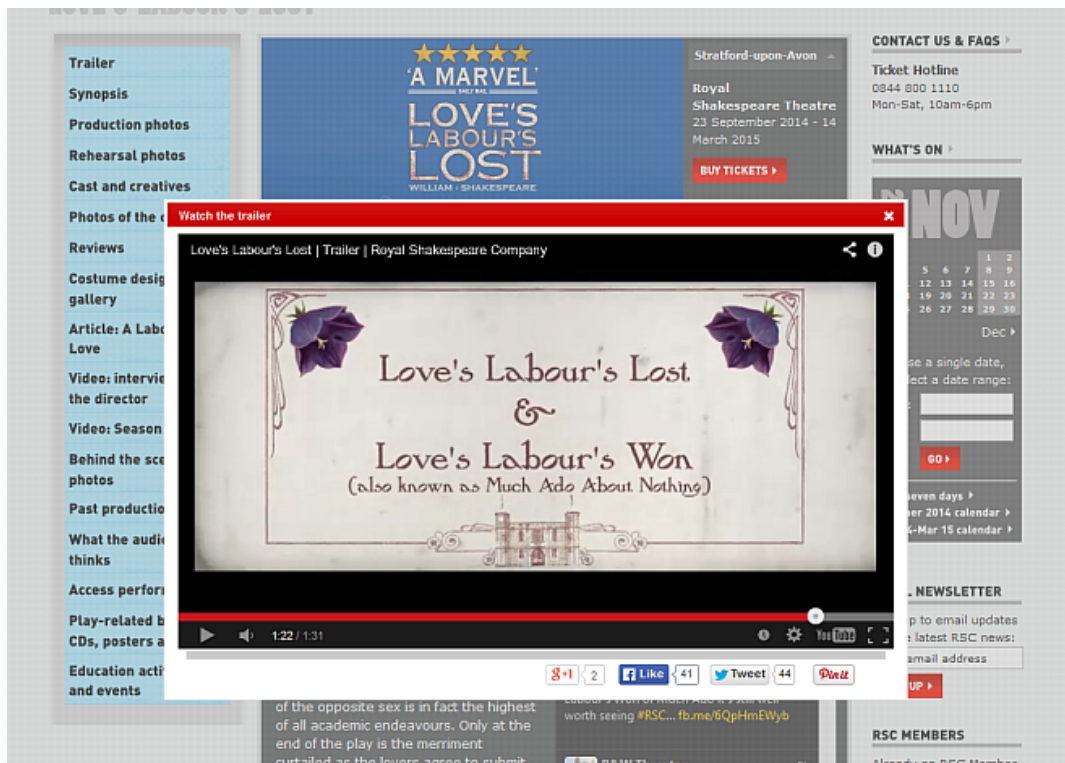


Figure 1. Royal Shakespeare Company, 2014; Christopher Luscombe, director. Screen Grab.

URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17jLGj\\_pBQ8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17jLGj_pBQ8)

The advance publicity on the RSC website describes the setting of the two plays as “either side of the First World War [... *Love’s Labour’s*



*Lost*] conjuring up the carefree elegance of a pre-war Edwardian summer; the other [*Much Ado*], in a post-war England when the world has changed forever.”<sup>4</sup> “Edwardian” refers to the period c. 1900-1914 in England, roughly coinciding with the reign of King Edward VII, 1901-1910. Going even further, the designer of a 1988 American production, set in the 1930s, noted that “the audience knows that everyone is on the brink of World War II. Berowne is undoubtedly killed in the war before the year is up.”<sup>5</sup> Berowne’s imminent death is certainly news to most of us: who knew that “a year and a day” really means “forever”?

What accounts for this way of setting the play in wartime? The play text, to be sure, repeatedly invokes tropes of warfare. The “civil war of wits” (2.1.222)<sup>6</sup> has long been recognized as central to the play’s linguistic texture.<sup>7</sup> The play’s rhetorical structure often follows the paradigm of a *débat* – literalized at the end of the play in the songs of spring and winter – and the “war” of wit is played out repeatedly in the encounters of the four lords and ladies as well as in the conversations of Armado, Holofernes, and Moth. “The tongues of mocking wenches,” Boyet marvels, “are as keen / As is the razor’s edge invisible [...] Their conceits have wings / Fleeter than arrows, bullets, wind, thought, swifter things” (5.2.256-61). These razors, arrows, and bullets are only figurative of course, as is the internalized, psychological “war against your own affections” (1.1.9) that Navarre urges on his fellow academics. In his great speech in 4.3, Berowne brings the four lords together in the language of chivalry and war as – each man now revealed as having lost the war against his own affections – they prepare to woo the ladies: “Have at you, then, affection’s men-at-arms!” Navarre answers him, “Saint Cupid, then! And, soldiers, to the field!” and Berowne returns with the martial-sexual cry, “Advance your standards, and upon them,

lords! / Pell-mell, down with them!” (4.3.281, 335-7). The Pageant of the Nine Worthies, too, represents figures of war, with Alexander the Great, “the world’s commander” with his “conquering might” (5.2.552-3), as well as Hector, trying to invoke “The armipotent Mars” (5.2.634), the god of war; Hector “far surmounted Hannibal” (5.2.652), but further claims of the deeds of war are interrupted by Costard’s news about Jaquenetta’s pregnancy, and the mock-chivalric “challenge” of Costard by Armado follows, stopped short by Armado’s sartorial short-comings: “I will not combat in my shirt” (5.2.681-2). Armado’s very name, finally, also serves as a reminder of the not-quite war with the Spanish fleet in 1588.

In addition to these linguistic and psychological threads, the play’s disputed debt between the King of France and Navarre concerns the “hundred thousand crowns, / Being but the one half of an entire sum,” supposedly “Disbursed by [Navarre’s] father in his wars” (2.1.126-9), while the four lords’ names point toward historical actors in the French wars of religion from the 1570s into the 1590s. The historical king from Navarre was Henri, not Shakespeare’s Ferdinand, but among the prominent figures around Henri of Navarre were the duc d’Alençon, Henri’s powerful enemy the duc de Mayenne, and Henri’s followers, the duc de Longueville and the duc de Biron.<sup>8</sup> The currency and topicality of these names in the early to mid-1590s seems significant, especially given Henri of Navarre’s famous conversion to Catholicism in 1593. “So outrageous was Henri’s abjuration to English Protestants [...] that *Love’s Labour’s Lost* may be the only Elizabethan literary text,” Richard Wilson has argued, “that dares, even elliptically, refer to it.”<sup>9</sup> But what exactly *is* the significance of these echoes, even if we accept Wilson’s claim? Answering that question is difficult, and I cannot see the play as the topical allegory that some have argued it is. It is certainly true

that many Elizabethans had first-hand knowledge of the events of St. Bartholomew's Day 1572. Sir Walter Raleigh fought for the Protestant cause in France as a teenager from 1568-1572, and was still writing about his experiences from his cell in the Tower of London in 1614.<sup>10</sup> If not first-hand, then Elizabethans had elaborate second-hand knowledge through the flood of pamphlets and polemical texts that reached England in the aftermath of the events of St. Bartholomew's Day, or through such sensationalistic plays as Christopher Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*.

Some scholars have argued that *Love's Labour's Lost* alludes to even earlier events in French politics – either a meeting between Navarre and Catherine de Medici in 1586, or much earlier, the meeting between Navarre and Marguerite de Valois in 1578.<sup>11</sup> The idea that these decades-earlier events in the French court materialize in Shakespeare's play seems to me highly unlikely, for too many reasons to investigate here. The most I can conclude is that Shakespeare seems to have employed these contemporary names from recent and current French history to encode “the French court” and “oath-breaking” in an extremely general way.

These and many other of the play's allusions to war, combat, or assault do not lead to actual violence on the stage, and the “wars” of Navarre's father seem to be over. Nevertheless, there has been a trend in Great Britain and the U.S since the 1970s to stage the play during or just before or after an actual war. This trend may have been inspired by the shock of the play's ending, in its announcement of the death of the Princess's off-stage father, the King of France. Shakespeare may have found the hint for this stunning reversal in one of the books he read, Pierre de la Primaudaye's *L'Académie Française*, published in France in 1577 and translated into English in 1586, with further editions in 1589 and 1594, close to *Love's Labour's*

*Lost's* period of composition. Like Berowne and his fellow academics in the play, the young scholars in *L'Académie Française* suffered shocking news from the outside world: "the sudden and sorrowfull newes of the last frantike returne of France into civill war brake up their happie assemblée." <sup>12</sup> Of course, NO British or American director or producer has ever invoked *L'Académie Française* as an inspiration for their production.

I believe that we can trace the turn to war in *Love's Labour's Lost's* production history to several events in the play's post-1945 critical and performance history, as well as to some larger cultural shifts. The first event is Peter Brook's 1946 RSC production. Although his design was inspired by Watteau and the production as a whole made no reference to war, Brook saw that Marcadé's shocking entrance totally changed the play: "I was struck," he said, by the fact that when

a new, unexpected character called Mercade came on, the whole play changed its tone entirely. He came into an artificial world to announce a piece of news that was real. He came on bringing death [...], there's no doubt that the dark touch gives the dimension to the whole piece. And it was through this that I brought Mercade over a rise at the back of the stage – it was evening, the lights were going down, and suddenly there appeared a man in black. The man in black came onto a very pretty summery stage, with everybody in pale pastel [...] costumes, and golden lights dying. It was very disturbing, and at once the whole audience felt that the world had been transformed. <sup>13</sup>

Director after director has followed Brook's lead, and his insights were put into academic form by the influential 1953 essay by Bobbyanne Rosen [later known as Anne Barton], who described Marcadé's entering the scene

silently from those shadows which now lie deep along the landscape of the royal park .... There is perhaps nothing like this moment in the whole range of Elizabethan drama. In the space of four lines the entire world of the play, its delicate balance of reality and illusion, all the hilarity and overwhelming

life of its last scene has been swept away and destroyed, as Death itself actually enters the park, for the first time, in the person of Marcade. <sup>14</sup>

Subsequent critics would demonstrate that death enters the play, not for the “first time” in this final moment, but much earlier, through a string of references, including the “disgrace of death” (1.1.3) in the opening speech, the “epitaph on the death of the deer” (4.2.45-6), the “death’s face in a ring” (5.2.598), and the “plague... tokens” (5.2.421-3) inscribed on the lovers’ faces. “Cormorant devouring time” (1.1.4) haunts the play. Still, Brook and Rosen established a paradigm of staging and interpretation, in which “the entire world of the play” (Rosen) as a whole is now seen as “an artificial world” (Brook) which is “swept away and destroyed” (Rosen) by the “real” (Brook), by “Death [...] in the person of Marcade” (Rosen). This reading is powerful and plausible, and many of us have profited from it, but it is perhaps worth noting that it nonetheless devalues almost everything that is energetic, positive, and attractive in the play as “artificial” and unreal, and that price may not be worth paying. <sup>15</sup> Moreover, six decades later Brook himself saw his production not as implicated *in* war, but influenced “by the post-war reaction against four years of drabness and austerity. We longed for elegance and charm,” which he found not in traditional Elizabethan clothing but in the paintings of Watteau. Brook in fact now describes the play as “an extraordinary, amazing and intoxicating experience,” which “suddenly introduced an enigmatic *coexistence* of light *and* dark.” <sup>16</sup>

Directors and critics usually justify the leap from the insights of Brook and Barton about the compelling entrance of Death into the play, to a production placing this play in a clearly defined war-time setting, by referring to the play as a whole as a “golden” or “unreal” world whose values cannot survive any encounter with the “real” –

that is war; surveying a number of productions set in the pre-World War II 1930s, one critic has claimed, with the dubious authority of hindsight, that these productions were the result of “the gathering storm which foreboded the approach of disaster for the world, [in which] people became more susceptible to the fear of the ominous intruder who might at any moment come and snatch away their life and mirth.”<sup>17</sup> This interpretive hind-sight comes too easily for me. *Love’s Labour’s Lost* has been set in many different time periods, and surely most often in a non-specific vaguely “Renaissance” period, with doublets and hose and the usual signifiers of “Shakespeare” (fig. 2).<sup>18</sup>



Figure 2. Globe Theatre, 2009. Screen Grab of DVD.

“Rosaline,” “Princess of France,” “Boyet,” “Katherine,” “Maria.”

The play has also frequently been set, as we would expect, in the eighteenth century, as in one American production that used “images from the mid-1750s” in order to “point up the artificiality of

the world of the self-indulgent and immature lords and ladies” (fig. 3). 19



Figure 3. BBC TV, 1985, directed by Elijah Moshinsky. Screen Grab of DVD.

“Dumaine,” “Ferdinand,” “Longaville.”

Virtually every time period from faux-“Renaissance” to the present has been deployed, and the transposition to later time periods is invariably justified as a way to make relevant, or to gloss over, for modern audiences what is also invariably called the play’s “difficult,” “obscure,” or “archaic” language.

But I am interested here specifically in those productions that invoke war as the play’s context. If the play must be set during, before, or between times of war, *which wars*, and *why*? 20 The threat of World War II, as I have already suggested, has frequently been used as a setting. Jerome Kilty, directing a 1985 production at the American Repertory Theatre (fig. 4), had “newly set” the play “in the



years immediately preceding the outbreak of World War II, the last era when the world still seemed fresh and humankind felt relatively free of threatening external exigencies,” according to the ART Artistic Director Robert Brustein. But the director Kilty asked, rather contradicting Brustein, for the period of the play, “why not the end of the Age of Anxiety, prelude to the Atomic Age?”<sup>21</sup> Why not indeed, but were the 1930s to be thought of as a “fresh” period of history “relatively free of threatening external” forces, which seems historically naïve (to say the least), or as the Age of pre-Atomic Anxiety? Blurring its supposed historical period, this production offered the setting of an Edwardian soirée – seemingly at one of the colleges at Oxford.



Figure 4. American Repertory Theatre, Cambridge, MA, 1985.

Photo by Richard Feldman. © American Repertory Theatre, courtesy of Internet Shakespeare Editions, University of Victoria (B.C., Canada).



Perhaps the most famous, or infamous, such setting occurred in Kenneth Branagh's 2000 film of the play, which again placed the play in the period just before World War II, in fact beginning precisely in September 1939 as the voice-over narrator (Branagh himself) intones:

Ominous clouds of war may be hovering over Europe, but here in Navarre, the young King, seen here returning from military manoeuvres, has announced an audacious plan. [...] He and his companions are to cast off their military uniforms, while world events still allow, and devote themselves to a rigorous three years of study. That's right, three years.

Throughout the film, war looms in the European theater, ominous movie reel headlines keep updating us, even briefly showing the D-Day invasion (fig. 5), and the film ends, not "a year and a day" later, but six years later, on V.E. Day 1945, when the principal characters, amazingly none the worse for their imprisonment by Nazi guards, in fact with their same clothes and in good health, reunite, finally bursting back into color (fig. 6).



Figure 5. Kenneth Branagh, director, 2000. Screen Grab of DVD.



Figure 6. Kenneth Branagh, director, 2000. Screen Grab of DVD.

The happy ending, however, did not include Boyet, who had joined the Resistance and was shot and had to die in gloomy black and white. “The ‘war’ element of the film,” Russell Jackson discretely notes, “in itself was problematic.” He reports that the script “originally called for a shot where the men’s aircraft would be seen flying over the massed crosses of a First World War graveyard,” but while that scene, we can be grateful, didn’t make it into the film, the “underlying sense” of the film was always that “retreat to a ‘little academe’ was an escape from the realities of the late 1930s.”<sup>22</sup> The aesthetic and historiographical justifications for these choices, however, remain obscure. In an interview, Branagh said he saw the 1930s as a “last idyll in the twentieth century ... a stolen, magical, idyllic time which nevertheless had a clock ticking.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, as in Kilty’s production, we have contradictory ideas about the 1930s

period: can it be both “a stolen, magical, idyllic time” *and* the one of brutal “realities” from which the lords “retreat” and “escape”?

Branagh’s attempt to fuse the 1930s musical genre, the Shakespearean text, and this ominous historical moment into an ultimately sunny and optimistic vision of plucky British endurance has been harshly critiqued in penetrating terms by Ramona Wray, Katherine Eggert, and others, as escapist nostalgia and “self-serving political myopia,” as Wray put it. <sup>24</sup> Leaving aside this analysis of Branagh’s aesthetics in general, I return to the problem of the choice of war in itself. Other directors have also set the play in the 1930s: one American production, as I have already noted, takes place, according to its director, in “the early 1930s, before the clouds of World War II darkened the national spirit. It was suggestive of the wit and wisdom of *Brideshead Revisited*,” and as the set designer confidently predicted, “Berowne is undoubtedly killed in the war before the year is up.” <sup>25</sup>

One final moment in the Branagh film leads us to another war: one of the “newsreel” shots Branagh deployed announces “Victory” in the bold headlines of the “Globe” newspaper (fig. 7), but a closer look at the masthead – notice the blue arrow pointing to the date – indicates VE day as November 11 (fig. 8).



Figure 7. Kenneth Branagh, director, 2000. Screen Grab of DVD.

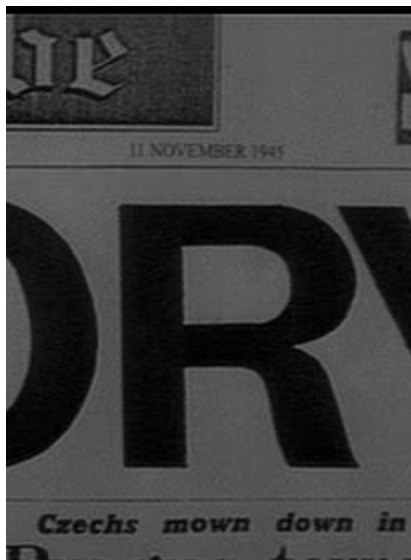


Figure 8. Kenneth Branagh Film DVD Screen Grab Detail.

But November 11 was of course when World War I ended, not World War 2; VE Day in World War II was 8 May 1945, while the Pacific war ended in August 1945. Branagh's conflation of the two wars – surely

not a simple historical mistake – not only introduces an historical indeterminacy, but suggests that the pre-World War I era is also part of his conception. <sup>26</sup> Like a magnet pulling one back, the Edwardian age (roughly from 1900 to the beginning of the Great War in 1914) has become the default period and style for staging many of Shakespeare’s plays but especially *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.

The first major production to set the play in the pre-World War I setting – and, as far as I can tell, the first production to set the play in *any* framework of war – seems to have been Robin Phillips’ 1978 Stratford, Ontario version in which, at the end of the play, as one reviewer described it:

A distant rumbling was heard, over the horizon. The principals paused, looking at each other, puzzled. Was it thunder? Or gunfire? The belle époque ended with the guns of the Marne on the horizon. <sup>27</sup>

In 1993, Ian Judge directed the RSC production that is often “referred to as the ‘Brideshead Revisited’ <sup>28</sup> production,” as Sylvia Norris has noted: “The programme cover of Judge’s production showing the four young men lounging in a punt was shot on the Avon, but was intended to suggest Oxford,” and, she observes, the imagery clearly alluded to the “Brideshead Revisited” television series (1981), which became extremely popular in the UK and the US, and then became a movie in 2008 (fig. 9 and 10).



**Figure 9. Brideshead Revisited, 1981, directed by Charles Sturridge and Michael Lindsay-Hogg.**

Anthony Andrews, Jeremy Irons. URL: [http://g-ecx.images-amazon.com/images/G/01/dvd/acorn/Brideshead\\_tall\\_large5.jpg](http://g-ecx.images-amazon.com/images/G/01/dvd/acorn/Brideshead_tall_large5.jpg)





Figure 10. Royal Shakespeare Company, 1993, Ian Judge, director. Program Cover.

"Ferdinand," "Berowne," "Longaville," "Dumaine." URL:  
<http://www.ianjudge.com/plays/loves-labours-lost-rsc>

The production evoked, through its costume and set designs, the now-past glories of the pre-war period. At the end of the production, as with Phillips', Norris reports, "the sky darkened and the sound of distant explosions was heard in the theatre, a premonition that the elegant, witty world of the play was about to come to an unbearably violent end." <sup>29</sup> As Peter Holland acerbically noted, "it was the long summer of 1914 and the young men would never live out their year and a day in the trenches, a more absolute solution than the text's open-endedness." <sup>30</sup>

Few war-time period productions of the play, however, could match Trevor Nunn's 2003 production at the National Theatre in London. I quote from the *National Theatre's Education Workpack*:

The last sweltering summer of 1914 before World War I has become [sic] fixed in memory as one of innocence and care-freedom. [...] In such an environment, when promises were made whose futures were uncertain and love pacts were torn asunder by the deafening clamour of bombs and massacre, we find direct correlation to our world of the play and the ambiguous ending that Shakespeare signals. <sup>31</sup>

The reviewer John Peter vividly described how Nunn's production altered the whole tone of the play at the very beginning:

We are in a forest clearing. The darkened Olivier stage is dominated by a bare beech, huge and ancient. Soldiers rush on. Explosions, gunfire. This is the first world war. An officer, whose resemblance to Wilfred Owen cannot be accidental, gets badly wounded. But this is *Love's Labour's Lost*, is it not? A comedy, surely? <sup>32</sup>

Marcadé entered, and spoke his line, "The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo," and we discover that "one of the soldiers is Berowne. He attempts to console a wounded companion and in this moment recalls the previous summer which started with a vow." <sup>33</sup> According to one reviewer, though it is not so specified in the National Theatre's program synopsis, Berowne himself is "mortally wounded." <sup>34</sup> After this opening frame, the battlefield then disappeared, the smoke clears, the lights come up, the soldier Berowne rises and cautiously joins his friends, and the play itself begins. What followed was the now familiar procession of Edwardian costumes and iconic signifiers (see fig. 16 below). The final scene of the play found Marcadé entering again – the shock surprise he usually generates undermined – and repeating his line. The final action returned to the battlefield, where "Berowne turns around and amidst the horror of war sees a nurse. She turns to him. It is Rosaline." <sup>35</sup> "Did Berowne die in battle?" the reviewer Peter wondered: "It remains an open-ended question." <sup>36</sup> However Berowne's fate was read, Nunn's version framed the play strictly in the "horror of war," not just suggesting it with a rumble of guns, but



showing it in some detail. Or, as the BBC reviewer said, noting that it was Nunn's last production as artistic director of the National Theatre, "If Nunn meant to go out with a bang, he need not have taken it quite so literally." <sup>37</sup>

Nunn's and many, many other productions of *Love's Labour's Lost* now place the play in the Edwardian period, partly to take advantage of the impending Great War, partly to indulge in costume orgies of English finery, but partly also to promulgate a particular reading of the play. One reviewer who approved of Nunn's version justified the setting thus: "The 1914-18 war is a great watershed dividing the antiquity of the nineteenth century from the modernity of the twentieth with all the technology. Trevor Nunn captures the nostalgia for this lost and elegant world where the women wear picture hats and long white lace dresses like the early film footage of the Tsarina Alexandra and her daughters, the Romanov grand duchesses." <sup>38</sup> Similar comments dominate the recent performance history of the play. For Nicholas Martin (in his 2006 Huntington Theatre production in Boston), the Edwardian period was "a time of insouciance and frivolity," and it "had a lightheartedness to it – there was a real rejection of Victorian era constraints [...]. The period from 1900-1912 seems to hold a sense of hope and innocence that resonates deeply with this play." <sup>39</sup> The play itself, another director asserted, "is *inherently* nostalgic." <sup>40</sup> The result of such assertions has been a sameness to many recent productions, as the following images suggest (fig. 11-19). <sup>41</sup>



**Figure 11. Royal Shakespeare Company, April 1965, Barton/Jacobs.**

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URL :

<http://www.ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/shakespeare/performancecdetails.do?performanceId=11449>



**Figure 12. Royal Shakespeare Company, March 1991, Hands/O'Brien.**

Donald Cooper: photographer. Rights: Donald Cooper. This image may be used for educational purposes only, any commercial use of this material requires the permission of the copyright holder.

URL :

<http://www.ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/shakespeare/imagedetails.do?imageId=17335>



**Figure 13. Royal Shakespeare Company, August 1973, Jones/O'Brien&Firth.**

Tom Holte: photographer. Rights: Thos. F. and Mig Holte Collection (Copyright Shakespeare Birthplace Trust). This image may be used for educational purposes only, any commercial use of this material requires the permission of the copyright holder.

URL:

<http://www.ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/shakespeare/imagedetails.do?imageId=15288>



**Figure 14. Royal Shakespeare Company, Judge/Gunter, January 1995.**

"Ferdinand," "Berowne," "Longaville," "Dumaine." URL:

<http://www.ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/shakespeare/imagedetails.do?imageId=17355>

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**Figure 15. Royal Shakespeare Company, Kyle/Crowley, August 1985.**

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URL :

<http://www.ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/shakespeare/imagedetails.do?imageId=17328>



**Figure 16. National Theatre, 2003, Trevor Nunn, director.**

Photograph: Tristram Kenton for the Guardian. Tristram Kenton/Guardian.

"Maria," "Princess of France," "Katherine." URL:

<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/apr/05/best-shakespeare-productions-loves-labours-lost>



**Figure 17. Shakespeare & Company, 2013, Lisa Wolpe, director.**

Photo by Kevin Sprague.

Kelly Galvin (Maria), Kate Abbruzzese (Katharine), Brooke Parks (Princess), Nafeesa Monroe (Rosaline). URL: [http://www.shakespeare.org/gallery3/index.php/2013/Love-s-Labor-s-Lost/Love-s-Labor-s-Lost/LovesLaborsSCO13SPRA\\_0253](http://www.shakespeare.org/gallery3/index.php/2013/Love-s-Labor-s-Lost/Love-s-Labor-s-Lost/LovesLaborsSCO13SPRA_0253)



**Figure 18.** Seattle Shakespeare Company, 2013, Jon Kretzu, director.

Photo by John Ulman.

Kayla Lian as Rosaline and Paul Stuart as Berowne." URL:

<http://www.seattleshakespeare.org/2012-2013-season/loves-labours-lost/loves-labours-lost-photos/#jp-carousel-3187>





Figure 19. Utah Shakespeare Company, 2013, Laura Gordon, director. Screen Grab.

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4IDI0xjmGLE>

And once again, the new 2014-15 Royal Shakespeare production in Stratford, England places the play in the “carefree elegance of a pre-war Edwardian summer” (evidently not “sweltering,” as in Trevor Nunn’s production). As the Director Christopher Luscombe says: “The idyllic, pastoral world of *Love's Labour's Lost*, with tragedy waiting in the wings, seems particularly well suited to the fragile beauty of the last Edwardian summer.”<sup>42</sup> Dumaine holds the obligatory *Brideshead Revisited* teddy bear in one scene, intimations of Noel Coward float through the production, and Marcadé enters dressed as a World War I French field marshall. After what one thinks are the final songs, the music turns into a military tune, and the lords reenter, wearing WW1 brown British army uniforms, to stand at attention downstage. Military drums are heard while Armado pronounces the Mercury/Apollo line, and the lords click their heels and march out. A harmonica is sadly playing a military

march. The lights fade away slowly on their military fate, which evidently is not to be reunited with the ladies as in Branagh's film.

Still, this RSC production concept seems to have preceded the director's involvement in the play, since, as Luscombe says, "RSC Artistic Director Gregory Doran wanted to commemorate the Great War, and suggested that I locate the plays [*Much Ado About Nothing* as well] either side of [the war]." <sup>43</sup> In a recent interview, Doran commented on the settings of the forthcoming productions of the two plays, and the reviewer perceptively asked, "a bit of a *Downton Abbey*?" <sup>44</sup> Indeed, Luscombe reports that:

For inspiration we chose a stately home that Shakespeare himself would have known – Charlecote Park close to Stratford, and where he was (allegedly) arrested for poaching as a young man. The actors were able to visit the house and start to conjure up the imagined community of Edwardian Warwickshire. For protocol expertise, we turned to Alastair Bruce, Equerry to the Earl of Wessex, and historical advisor on *Downton Abbey* and *The King's Speech*. His sessions with the company were a revelation. <sup>45</sup>



Figure 20. Charlecote Park.

Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons.

URL:

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charlecote\\_Park,\\_Warwick\\_\(3971634358\).jpg#/media/File:Charlecote\\_Park,\\_Warwick\\_\(3971634358\).jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charlecote_Park,_Warwick_(3971634358).jpg#/media/File:Charlecote_Park,_Warwick_(3971634358).jpg)

There's certainly nothing like a genuine Equerry to the Earl of Wessex to help authenticate an "imagined community," not to mention the invocation of the false legend of Shakespeare's deer-poaching. And so we have yet another Edwardian production. Still, as the reference to the 2010 film *The King's Speech* indicates, they just can't stay away from the 1930s and the advent of World War II. While it may seem that almost any war will do, or that the two World Wars can easily be collapsed together, certainly the Great War, World War I, remains the preferred period (fig. 21-22).



Figure 21. Royal Shakespeare Company, 2014, Christopher Luscombe, director.

Michelle Terry as Rosaline, Flora Spencer-Longhurst as Katherine, Leah Whitaker as Princess of France and Frances McNamee as Maria. URL: <http://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/loves-labours-lost/production-photos.aspx>

Photo by Manuel Harlan.





Figure 22. Royal Shakespeare Company, 2014, Christopher Luscombe, director.

John Hodgkinson as Don Armado, Nick Haverson as Costard, Chris McCalphy as Dull, Peter McGovern as Moth and Thomas Wheatley as Sir Nathaniel. URL: <http://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/loves-labours-lost/production-photos.aspx>  
Photo by Manuel Harlan.

The “imagined community” of *Downton Abbey* or *Brideshead Revisited* or *Charlecote Park* represents a sentimental appeal to American and English audiences in particular. The Edwardian period is the embodiment of what is now called “heritage Shakespeare [...] a static and narrow conception of British history, national identity, and the national poet,” as recent critics have put it, a conception that marks the “stability of English national identity [...] as enshrined in the tourist industry and embodied in the national curriculum.”<sup>46</sup> Heritage Shakespeare imagines the past in terms of space and time as a pre-industrial, neo-pastoral Englishness – certainly not Welsh or, god forbid, Scottish. The typical setting is a grand country estate, far from the tedious coal mines, workers’

strikes, and immigrant suppression in the rest of the country (fig. 23-26).



Figure 23. Royal Shakespeare Company, 2014, Christopher Luscombe, director.

Photo by Manuel Harlan.

URL: <http://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/loves-labours-lost/production-photos.aspx>



Figure 24. Cast of *Downton Abbey*. Screen Grab.

URL: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/downtonabbey/season1.html>



**Figure 25. Highclere Castle (“Downton Abbey”).**

Photograph licensed under CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons.

URL:

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Highclere\\_Castle\\_\(April\\_2011\).jpg#/media/File:Highclere\\_Castle\\_\(April\\_2011\).jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Highclere_Castle_(April_2011).jpg#/media/File:Highclere_Castle_(April_2011).jpg)





Figure 26. Castle Howard (*Brideshead Revisited*).

Photograph licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons.

URL:

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Castle\\_Howard.jpg#/media/File:Castle\\_Howard.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Castle_Howard.jpg#/media/File:Castle_Howard.jpg)

It is a myopically utopian era marked by moral purity but unmarked by ethnicity or race, except to make fun of non-English foreigners, or class resentments, except to show loyal, solid servants. But the alleged innocent bliss of “the last Edwardian summer,” or the “fresh” and “relatively free of threatening external exigencies” 1930s, it seems to me, may also be seen as an instance, however benign, of what Renato Rosaldo has called “imperialist nostalgia,” a fantasy reimagining of an earlier time as a period of lost, or last, innocence, by which one’s own position of privilege or domination is concealed. The *Downton Abbey*/*Brideshead Revisited*/*Charlecote Park* positioning of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* in so many main-line English and anglophilic American productions both panders to belief in the alleged classlessness of current society and simultaneously

constructs an ex post facto wisdom in which, as from on high, we the audience witness the doomed triviality of the lords and ladies and their language games. We should be especially alert, then, to how often the word or concept of “nostalgia” occurs in relation to these productions, and to the play itself.

Svetlana Boym has described nostalgia as “a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed,” a sentiment “of loss and displacement” which is “a romance with one’s own fantasy”; it “inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheaval,” and “outbreaks of nostalgia often follow revolutions.” Boym would no doubt categorize the war-nostalgic productions of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* as an instance of what she terms “restorative” nostalgia – a communal or national metanarrative that “attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home. [...] Restorative nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather of truth and tradition. [... But in fact it] protects the absolute truth.” Such nostalgia is therefore a “defensive formation,” in Derek Hook’s words, “underscored by a fundamentally conservative impulse to resist any change to its regime of idealizing self-understandings.” Nostalgia is thus about the present or future, a mediation or protection against the anxieties and horrors of history – “history without the guilt,” as Michael Kammen has put it. Thus the pre-war Edwardian period is one of “carefree elegance,” the “belle époque,” “innocence and care-freedom,” a “lost and elegant world,” a period of “lightheartedness,” “idyllic,” and “pastoral” in these accounts.

In other words, the Edwardian-nostalgic, pre- or post-war settings of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* precede from and reinforce, in a hermeneutic loop, a particular interpretive reading of the play that I am suggesting should be reconsidered. In this Edwardian/wartime



reading, the play's incredibly inventive and energetic language games, its wit, its inspirations of desire, its satire of humanism's excesses, its recognition of the mingled threads of life, its subtle analysis of how the power of sublimation redirects anxieties and desires into art – in short, everything that makes the play the wonderful and challenging experience that it can be, is in effect dismissed as 'unreal' and 'artificial'; only the death announced by Marcadé is considered 'real.' But surely this is an impoverished and limiting reading of the play. It is, moreover, a complacent account of the play from a false position of allegedly superior historical vision.

I do not mean to suggest that the productions I have mentioned are not *good* ones – indeed, I've seen many of them, and found many of them enchanting and provocative, the acting outstanding, and learned much about the play from them. Yet productions of *Love's Labour's Lost* in other countries, including some actually at war or during the Cold War, as I have briefly described elsewhere, <sup>47</sup> do not rely on this default historical moment. Certainly Corinne Jaber's production in Kabul, Afghanistan in 2005 and 2006, under extraordinarily dangerous war conditions, contrasts dramatically with the safely nostalgic Edwardian settings (fig. 27-28).



Figure 27. The play in the ruins of the Babur Garden, 2005, director Corinne Jaber.

Photograph courtesy of AP Images Tomas Munita.

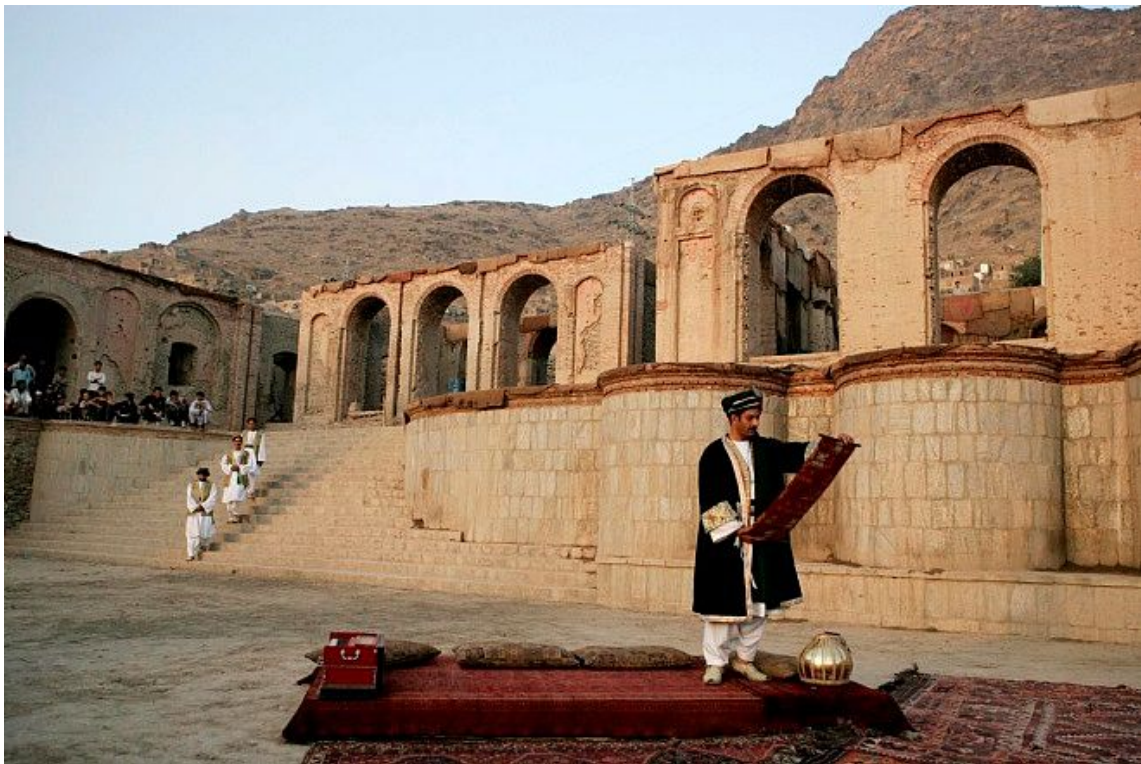


Figure 28. The opening scene of the play, 2005, director Corinne Jaber.

Photo courtesy of Corinne Jaber.

Jaber's was the first production of a Shakespeare play since the Soviet invasion in 1979. Jaber observed in an interview that the Afghan actors did not want to do tragedies, after more than twenty years of war. The play's setting was changed from Navarre to Afghanistan, and Navarre was now the King of Kabul, and the ladies visited, not from the French court, but from Herat. The play's comic "masque of Muscovites" had to be transformed, given the still-fresh and painful memories of the Soviet invasion and occupation – to a masque of Indians, with slapstick Bollywood elements added to the play. The adapted playtext cut the elaborate comic subplots, and focused on the power of romantic love, finding striking analogies between the play and the current cultural situation: "the fact that

four young men would retire to study and withdraw from the world in that kind of ascetic retreat [was] something that everybody could relate to,” Jaber reported. And noting that the “whole play is about these women,” Jaber quoted Berowne’s speech in 4.3:

From women’s eyes this doctrine I derive:  
They sparkle still the right Promethean fire;  
They are the books, the arts, the academes,  
That show, contain, and nourish all the world. (4.3.319-22)

She then commented that it is “an extraordinary thing to say in a society where most of the time that’s all you see of a woman ... her eyes. All this made so much sense and people could relate to it. This courtship [... is] like a hymn to women, which I felt was important.”

<sup>48</sup> Other productions of the play produced 1950-1989, in countries behind the Iron Curtain, have been equally different from the Edwardian-nostalgic productions in Britain and the US.

There is, finally, a striking difference between the Edwardian-period nostalgia of so many stage productions, and some recent films of Shakespeare’s plays that have moved toward more provocative settings and periodization: for example, Michael Almereyda’s *Hamlet*, set in New York 2000, Julie Taymor’s *Titus*, set both in the present and in an imagined blend of ancient Rome and fascist Italy, or Baz Luhrmann’s *Romeo + Juliet*, set in a contemporary cross between Los Angeles and Mexico City. Films of Shakespeare’s comedies have had some reinvention, as well, such as Josh Whedon’s recent *Much Ado About Nothing*. And so, it’s good to know, has *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, in the latest film by the Argentine director Matias Piñero entitled *The Princess of France*; Piñero has also remade *As You Like It* as *Rosalinda* (2010) and *Twelfth Night* as *Viola* (2012). Piñero’s *The Princess of France* (fig. 29-30) centers on a young man who is staging a radio play based on *Love’s Labour’s Lost* while simultaneously trying to deal with his own love life.



Figure 29. Matias Piñero, The Princess of France, 2014 Trailer. Screen Grab.

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZ7ZceQeqHY>



Figure 30. Matias Piñero, *The Princess of France*, 2014 Trailer. Screen Grab.

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZ7ZceQeqHY>

Following the death of his father, Victor returns to Buenos Aires from Mexico and attempts to revive his artistic pursuits, and to confront his prior romantic foibles. Snippets of Shakespearean text, often printed on screen, come not only from *Love's Labour's Lost* but other Shakespearean plays as well. <sup>49</sup> The former theatre company includes five women, and Victor's love life and the plot of the play begin to overlap. This film is not yet in general release, and it is an appropriation rather than a straightforward production of the play, but it is encouraging to see a truly new approach to the play. Piñero says in an interview that he attempts to respond to an "idea of acting or imagination that the Elizabethan theatre is asking for, or that Shakespeare is asking for. [...] I think that many of the representations of Shakespeare nowadays don't follow very well that statement: they try to present the plays as if they were realistic tales, which they are not." <sup>50</sup>

Thomas Mann, to return to my beginning, commented some years later on the diary passage that I began this article with, noting that "The Shakespeare play [...] falls within the magic circle – while around it sounds the uproar of the world" – that is, "the world that did not pertain to the novel." <sup>51</sup> For him at least, it was possible to hold war and imaginative art simultaneously in mind, neither one cancelling or erasing the other. After all, *Love's Labour's Lost* ends not with a song of Winter, but with a song of Spring *and* a song of Winter, both songs mingling sadness *and* life's ongoing energy, in what Holofernes terms a "dialogue." A dialogue, of course, requires two sides to speak. We should remember Peter Brook's comment, that the play offers "an enigmatic *coexistence* of light *and* dark." If we

forget that, and offer war as the only thing that is “real,” then great things laboring will perish in their birth.



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## NOTES

1. This translation from Thomas Mann, *The Story of a Novel: The Genesis of 'Doctor Faustus'*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston, New York, Knopf, 1961, p. 28-9. For the original, see Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1940-1943*, ed. Peter de Mendelssohn, Frankfurt, S. Fischer, 1982, p. 577.
2. In the diary entry for 23 May 1943, Mann wrote "Begann vormittags 'Dr. Faust' zu schreiben. [...] Nach Tische 'Love's Labour Lost' [...] Abends wieder im Shakespeare. [...] Es sieht politisch furchtbar aus; baldiger militärischer Sieg ist verzweifelt nötig," *ibid.*, p. 579.
3. George Bernard Shaw, "Review of the Dramatic Students at St. James's Theatre," in *Love's Labour's Lost: Critical Essays*, ed. Felicia Hardison Londré, New York, Routledge, 1997, p. 346. Shaw was writing in 1886, but many current productions and critical essays still refer to the play in these terms: e.g., as "a great summer bon-bon" (in reference to Michael Langham's 1974 production at the Guthrie Theatre [Mike Steele, "Review," in Londré, *op. cit.*, p. 381]) or as offering "an elegant springtime world, potent as May and redolent of the innocent luxury of *Brideshead Revisited*" (in reference to a 1988 production at the Great Lakes Theater Festival [Marianne Evett, "Another Winner, A Feast Worthy of the Bard Himself," in Londré, *op. cit.*, p. 417]).
4. <http://tracking.wordfly.com/view/?sid=MTg0Xzk3MTRfNDcyNzg1XzY5OTE&l=cf607bb5-1634-e411-b26f-e41f1345a486>; accessed 9 October, 2014.
5. John Ezell, "On Designing *Love's Labour's Lost* – Twice," in Londré, *op. cit.*, p. 434.
6. Quotations from the play, hereafter cited in the text, are from *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. William C. Carroll, Cambridge, CUP, 2009.
7. See Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us*, Cambridge, CUP, 1935.
8. See the full discussions in Carroll, *op. cit.* (p. 27-29), Mary Ellen Lamb, "The Nature of Topicality in 'Love's Labour's Lost,'" *Shakespeare Survey* 38 (1985), 49-59; Paul Voss, *Elizabethan News Pamphlets* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001); and Gillian Woods, "Catholicism and Conversion in *Love's Labour's Lost*," in *How To Do Things with Shakespeare*, ed. Laurie Maguire, Malden, Blackwell, 2008, p. 101-130, among others.
9. Richard Wilson, "'Worthies away': The Scene Begins to Cloud in Shakespeare's Navarre," in Jean-Christophe Mayer, ed., *Representing France and the French in Early Modern English Drama*, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 2008, p. 104. Wilson, however, reads the play to its last detail, almost allegorically, as a response to Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*, positing an impossibly precise topicality.

10. Sir Walter Raleigh, *The History of the World* (London, 1614): “that worthie Gentleman, Count Lodowick of Nassau, brother to the late famous Prince or Orange, make the retrait at Moncountour with so great resolution, as hee saved the one halfe of the Protestant Armie, then broken and disbanded, of which my selfe was an eye-witnesse; and was one of them that had cause to thanke him for it” (5.2.8; p. 419).
11. See Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 55-7.
12. Quoted in Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1966, 1.435.
13. Peter Brook, *The Shifting Point: Theatre, Film, Opera 1946-1987*, New York, Harper & Row, 1987, p. 11.
14. Bobbyann Roesen [Anne Barton], “*Love’s Labour’s Lost*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 4 (1953), p. 424.
15. This denigration of roughly 98% of the play’s text stems in part from the conventional denigration of comedy as not a “serious” genre. Even John Dover Wilson’s important conversion about the play’s value on the stage, based on the 1932/1936 Tyrone Guthrie staging, was back-handed in its surprised praise, as Wilson came to realize “that for all its surface lightness and frivolity, the play had behind it a serious mind at work, with a purpose,” in *Shakespeare’s Happy Comedies*, London, Faber & Faber, 1962, p.73.
16. Peter Brook, *The Quality of Mercy: Reflections on Shakespeare*, London, Nick Hern Books, 2013, p. 29-30, 95-6 (my emphasis).
17. James Hisao Kodama, “Armado’s ‘You That Way; We This Way,’” in Londré, *op. cit.*, p. 364.
18. Although a 1992 production at Manchester’s Royal Exchange Theatre set the play pretty specifically “around 1640,” the production seems to have otherwise been much less specific, and no reason is given for that date, as opposed, say, to 1595 (Amy Reiter, “Continuous Sonnets,” in Londré, *op. cit.*, p. 441).
19. Melia Bensussen, “Envoi,” in Londré, *op. cit.*, p. 471-472. The production was at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, April 1994. The BBC Television version was directed by Elijah Moshinsky (1985).
20. A 1977 production of the play by the Alabama Shakespeare Festival had set the play precisely on April 10, 1932, and set it in the south of France, though no threatening war clouds were seen on the sunny Provençal horizon, in the “era of Noel Coward and Cole Porter.” Carol McGinnis Kay, “The Alabama Shakespeare Festival,” in *Shakespeare in the South*, ed. Philip Kolin, Jackson, UP of Mississippi, 1983, p. 251-252, 254.
21. Production *Program*, 1984-85 Season, American Repertory Theatre, p. 1, 12.
22. Russell Jackson, “Filming Shakespeare’s Comedies: Reflections on *Love’s Labour’s Lost*,” in *Shakespearean Performance: New Studies*, ed. Frank Occhiogrosso, Madison, N.J., Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2008, p. 71.



23. Quoted in Ramona Wray and Mark Thornton Burnett, "From the Horse's Mouth: Branagh on the Bard," in *Shakespeare, Film, Fin de Siècle*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000, p. 174.
24. Ramona Wray, "Nostalgia for Navarre: The Melancholic Metacinema of Kenneth Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost*," in *Shakespeare into Film*, eds. James M. Welsh et al, New York, Checkmark Books, 2002, p. 196; Katherine Eggert, "Sure Can Sing and Dance: Minstrelsy, the Star System, and the Post-Postcoloniality of Kenneth Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost* and Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night*," in *Shakespeare, The Movie II*, eds. Richard Burt and Lynda E. Boose, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 75.
25. Gerald Freedman, "On Directing *Love's Labour's Lost* – Five Times," in Londré, *op. cit.*, p. 428-429; Ezell, in Londré, *op. cit.* p. 434.
26. Wray, *op. cit.*, p. 197, notes the discrepancy in the headline, and comments that this "temporal breakdown stands as an overdetermined moment, robbing the decade of the distinctive identity" that the film "works so hard to establish elsewhere. [... This] chronological rupture introduces a notion of historical indeterminacy [...] it highlights the characteristically postmodern ways in which nostalgia is driven, not from a knowledge of or even a desire for the past, but from a fear or dislike of the present" (p. 198). But there is another example of the film's historical indeterminacy that Wray does not note, when Branagh shows a newspaper headline at 1:22:08 that reads "DEATH OF HIS MAJESTY THE KING," while a smaller-headlined story reads "Lord Gort Head of Field Force." Gort was appointed head of the British Expeditionary Force in September 1939, while George V died on 20 January 1936 – the film being drawn chronologically backwards in multiple ways. George V was the only king to die in office between Edward VII, who died on 6 May 1910, and George VI on 6 February 1952.
27. Ralph Berry, quoted in Miriam Gilbert, *Shakespeare in Performance: Love's Labour's Lost*, Manchester, Manchester UP, 1996, p. 118.
28. *Brideshead Revisited*, a novel by Evelyn Waugh published in 1945, follows the young aristocrat, Lord Sebastian Flyte and his friend Charles Ryder, from 1923-1943.
29. Sylvia Morris, "The Shakespeare Blog," <http://theshakespeareblog.com/2014/02/loves-labours-won/> (accessed October 21, 2014).
30. Peter Holland, *English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the English Stage in the 1990s* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), p. 176.
31. *NT Education Workpack: Love's Labour's Lost*, p. 5 (my emphasis); available online at <http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/document/love%E2%80%99s-labour%E2%80%99s-lost-education-pack> (accessed October 21, 2014). Joseph Fiennes, who played Berowne, like many actors, directors, and scholars, described the concept almost "as in a Turgenev or a Chekhov play. There is the threat of revolution looming behind the silver birches on the quiet estate. There is the allusion to war, and it's a theme which many of the characters refer [to] when they compare their affections or emotions to a battlefield" (p. 7).

32. John Peter, "Growing Pains," *Sunday Times*: 19. Mar 02 2003 (<http://search.proquest.com/docview/316720005?accountid=9676>, accessed 5 March 2015).
33. *NT Education Workpack: Love's Labour's Lost*, p. 2.
34. Lizzie Loveridge, "Love's Labour's Lost," *Curtain Up*, 25 February 2003; <http://www.curtainup.com/loveslabour2003.html>, accessed 23 October 2014.
35. *NT Education Workpack: Love's Labour's Lost*, *op. cit.*, p. 4. The production promptbook, in the National Theatre Archives, reads: "Rosaline & Berowne look at each other. B/O [i.e. Blackout]."
36. Peter, "Growing Pains," *op. cit.* (<http://search.proquest.com/docview/316720005?accountid=9676>, accessed 5 March 2015).
37. Mark Shenton, "Trevor Nunn bids farewell," *BBC News*, 23 February 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/2792487.stm>; accessed 21 October 2014.
38. Loveridge, "Love's Labour's Lost," *op. cit.*
39. *Production Program*, Huntington Theatre Company, p. 19.
40. Benjamin Evett, "Director's Notes," *Production Program*, The Actors' Shakespeare Project, p. 11 (my emphasis); Evett does not specify what the play is nostalgic for. Evett's stripped-down production, with a cast of six each taking multiple parts, was not set in any particular time period.
41. Dozens of similar images can easily be found of UK and US productions.
42. <http://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/loves-labours-lost/article-a-labour-of-love.aspx>, accessed 23 October 2014.
43. *Ibid.*
44. At the intermission of the RSC "Live From Stratford-upon-Avon" projection of their recent *Two Gentlemen of Verona* production; the broadcast was shown in the U.S. on 28 September 2014.
45. [www.rsc.org.uk](http://www.rsc.org.uk), *op. cit.*
46. Roberta E. Pearson and William Uricchio, "Brushing Up Shakespeare: Relevance and Televisual Form," in Diana E. Henderson, ed., *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare on Screen*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2006, p. 199. See also Andrew Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema: Costume Drama since 1980*, Oxford, OUP, 2003.
47. See W.C. Carroll, "Love's Labour's Lost in Afghanistan", *Shakespeare Bulletin* 28.4 (2010), 443-458.
48. . All quotations from and references to Jaber's production come from my "Love's Labour's Lost in Afghanistan", *op. cit.*
49. Andrew Tracy reports that "The play's prologue ropes in the Chorus' opening oration from *Henry V*, while the epilogue spoken after the film's closing credits is that from Piñeiro's beloved *As You Like It*" ("Beautiful Games: Matías Piñeiro on The Princess of

France,” *Cinema Scope Online*, <http://cinema-scope.com/cinema-scope-magazine/tiff-2014-princess-france-matias-pineiro-argentina-wavelengths/>, accessed 20 November 2014).

50. *Ibid.*

51. Mann, *The Story of a Novel*, *op. cit.*, p. 29, 28.

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## ABSTRACTS

This paper investigates the trope of war in relation to the critical and performance history of *Love's Labour's Lost*. The “civil war of wits” has long been recognized as central to the play’s linguistic texture, as has the “war against your own affections” that Navarre urges on his fellow academe-lovers. In addition to these linguistic and psychological threads, the play’s disputed debt between France and Navarre concerns the “wars” waged by Navarre’s father, while the four lords’ names point toward historical actors in the French wars of religion from the 1570s into the 1590s. Beyond these well-cited links, however, the play has an unusual history of being performed in actual war-time, or staged in a war-setting, as in Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus*, the Branagh film, and productions directed by Robin Phillips, Trevor Nunn and Corinne Jaber, among others. Publicity for the current RSC production describes the setting as just before the First World War, “conjuring up the carefree elegance of a pre-war Edwardian summer.” This paper explores why the play has so frequently been associated with war, and particularly the Edwardian period.

Cet article s’intéresse au trope de la guerre en relation à l’histoire de la critique et des mises en scène de *Peines d’amour perdues*. La « guerre civile » des beaux esprits est au cœur de la matière linguistique de la pièce, tout comme la « guerre » que doivent mener les hommes de Navarre contre leurs affections. Outre la dimension linguistique et psychologique, le conflit autour de la dette entre France et Navarre est un héritage des « guerres » menées par le père de Ferdinand et le nom des acolytes du roi renvoie à des protagonistes des guerres de religion en France dans les années 1570 à 1590. Au-delà de ces références bien connues, la pièce a souvent été jouée en période de guerre, ou mise en scène dans une ambiance de guerre : ainsi du *Docteur Faust* de Thomas Mann, du film de Kenneth Branagh et des mises en scène de Robin Phillips, Trevor Nunn et Corinne Jaber, entre autres. Les documents publicitaires relatifs à la mise en scène de la Royal Shakespeare Company qui se joue en ce moment indiquent que l’action se déroule immédiatement avant la Première Guerre Mondiale, « dans l’élégance insouciant du dernier été avant la guerre de l’Angleterre édouardienne ». L’association de *Peines d’amour perdues* à la guerre, et en particulier à la période édouardienne, sera traitée en détail.

# INDEX

**Mots-clés:** Peines d'amour perdues, mise en scène, Première Guerre Mondiale, Seconde Guerre Mondiale

**Keywords:** Love's Labour's Lost, performance history, World War I, World War II

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# ‘Dead, for my life’: Stopping, Starting and Interrupting in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*

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I edited *Love’s Labour’s Lost* for the Arden Shakespeare nearly twenty years ago. <sup>1</sup> The Arden series is famous for its detailed commentaries or notes on the play and I hope the ones that I wrote are occasionally helpful. Editing is a slow process and it took me several years to start work on the edition and then to produce it. The patience of the General Editors of the series was sorely tested. At the end of the process, the editor is sent a series of proofs: the first proofs that arrive are of just the text of the play; after that come the textual apparatus, the Commentary, the Introduction, and finally the appendices – eventually, when these separate sets of proofs have been turned into proper pages, the index appears and you are able to spend happy hours filling in page numbers and trying to make sure the index is useful and works. However, it is the text of the play that requires closest attention; all the minute decisions you have taken about spelling and punctuation, whether a speech is in prose or



verse, what the title of the play is and what its characters should be called come back to haunt you.

I must have checked the proof text against the first surviving Quarto of 1598 some three or four or even more times. If the text of the play and its layout contain errors, this suggests that much else in the edition will be wrong. Readers expect accuracy and consistency; as the great classical scholar and poet A.E. Housman maintained, accuracy is a duty not a virtue. When you are checking a text against its original or even a typescript, in effect you read it twice while watching, as it were, a sort of game of tennis; the editor's eyes move from the copy on the left to the printed version on the right. Thus checking a text three or four times means that you read it six or eight times. How often in the course of editing the play did I read *Love's Labour's Lost*? It must have been a good twenty or thirty times. Yet I noticed that even when reading the proofs – a mixture of mechanical tedium and deep terror – every time that I got near to the entry of Monsieur Marcadé towards the end of the last scene, I would sit up and get that prickling or trembling in the back of the head, a shiver down the spine, that signals a range of emotions between fear, pleasure, and excitement that great art – music, poetry, painting – can produce. Housman described a similar effect: 'Experience has taught me, when I am shaving of a morning, to keep watch over my thoughts, because, if a line of poetry strays into my memory, my skin bristles so that the razor ceases to act.' <sup>2</sup> I feel that way about that extraordinary moment when Marcadé appears, interrupts the games between the lovers and completely changes the play's mood and direction.

If we look at the moment in the Quarto as it appeared in print for the first time (or perhaps the second, but at least the first time we can see it), we might notice something quite striking. Marcadé says 'The

King your father'; the Queen replies 'Dead for my life.' And the messenger responds 'Euen so: my tale is tolde.' <sup>3</sup> It is a wonderfully concise and powerful exchange that draws on a well-used contemporary saying ('the tale is told'), but which also points to the play's close engagement with narrative and plot – or rather, as we might think of it as plotlessness. For, after all, the play resolves nothing; as Berowne says: 'Our wooing doth not end like an old play: Jack hath not Jill' ( v .ii.862). At the close of the play, the tale of whether the King and his courtiers will pair off and marry the Princess and her Ladies is not told and the audience is left in an agony of suspension and uncertainty. Marcadé's interruption brings to a premature close the masque of the Nine Worthies, the men's wooing of the ladies, and Shakespeare's play as a whole. But there is something about the way in which Marcadé does this that I missed when editing the play. 'The King your father', he begins and then is interrupted by the Princess, 'Dead for my life.' Yet looking at the Quarto, there is no mark of punctuation after Marcadé's news about the King, just white space. The Queen interrupts him and interruption in English drama is nowadays usually marked with a dash, as it is in my edition:

MARCADÉ. I am sorry, madam, for the news I bring  
Is heavy on my tongue. The King, your father –  
PRINCESS . Dead, for my life!  
MARCADÉ . Even so, my tale is told.  
( v .ii.713-715)

But the dash as a punctuation mark signalling interruption, incompleteness, or a breaking off of thought did not exist in the drama in 1598.

Until around 1600, the usual way to mark an interruption was with commas, colons, semi-colons, unhelpful full points or, as here in *Love's Labour's Lost* , with just no punctuation at all – the dash was not

part of the grammar of interruption. For example, in Shakespeare's poem *The Rape of Lucrece*, Tarquin breaks Lucrece off while she is in full flow, pleading with him not to rape her: 'So let thy thoughts low vassals to thy state, / No more quoth he, by Heauen, I will not heare thee.' <sup>4</sup> In the first quarto of 1594 her speech ends mid-sentence with a comma.

The classical rhetorical figure employed here is *aposiopesis*; it was widely recognised and relatively common in the writing of Shakespeare's period. The word comes from the Greek for 'to keep silent'; the figure was discussed by Quintilian and most fully in English by George Puttenham in *The arte of English poesie* (1589, but probably dating from 1570). In describing *aposiopesis* or 'the figure of silence', Puttenham says that it is used:

when we begin to speake a thing, and breake of in the middle way, as if either it needed no further to be spoken of, or that we were ashamed, or afraide to speake it out. It is also sometimes done by way of threatning, and to shew a moderation of anger. <sup>5</sup>

None of the examples he gives of the figure, is punctuated unusually, or has distinctive typographical marks: the figure stands on its own and is not signalled by special sorts of punctuation.

*Aposiopesis* gave a sort of emotional realism to dialogue or conversation, making the unsaid and the unsayable a leading way of representing how people actually talk and think. Despite the danger of its over-use, there was not just classical, but also divine precedent for it. Christ's words from John 12:27 'My soul is heavy: what shall I say' were thought to be a suitable example of it.

Dashes occur in some Elizabethan prose works, and usually signal that someone is being interrupted. <sup>6</sup> Yet if we examine the texts of plays written for the commercial theatre and which were printed between 1584 and 1599, we shall, as far as I know, not find a single

interrupting dash in them, either in their first editions or in reprints during that period. My general sense is that they do not occur in manuscript plays copied before 1600: interestingly, there are none in *Sir Thomas More*. Then, out of the blue, in 1600 Jonson's *Every Man out of his Humour* exhibits a rash of around thirty dashes in the later part of the play (all after gathering E). With one exception, they are always in the play's prose parts. This is the earliest surviving printing of any of Jonson's work. <sup>7</sup> The quarto displays the typographical inventiveness and sensitivity to punctuation with which Jonson is usually associated. All of these features suggest Jonson's close involvement with the book's typographical design and that he was responsible for introducing the dashes.

Once Jonson introduced the dash to play-reading audiences in 1600 it quickly caught on. The process can be easily demonstrated by looking at the occurrence of dashes in Shakespeare quartos. They first appear in the quarto text of *King Lear* in 1608, which contains twelve or thirteen of them (one was removed in the course of printing), all set from one or more en hyphens. In *Troilus and Cressida*, printed the next year, there are sixteen, many set from solid rules. There is also a development: they are used when speakers interrupt themselves, lose the thread of what they are saying, or are simply overwhelmed with emotion. With the first quarto of *Othello* (1622), a play which makes much use of interruption, the text is rendered almost telegraphic by some 69 dashes, including eight on one page. In time, the dash became a major feature of expressive typography and was particularly associated with the drama. Some plays make what might seem to us an extraordinarily heavy use of them: Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* of 1607/8 has a huge number, while his *Trick to Catch the Old One* of 1608 has about 109 and

Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1611) contains around 140 dashes, and another 40 related to stage directions.

## II

Marcadé's sudden entrance and his broken-off exchange with the Princess suggest the importance of the role of interruption in the play. The word 'interrupt' itself, with its derivatives, is not a common one in Shakespeare, occurring no more than fifteen times in all of his writings and twice in our play. To go back to the news of the King's death, we might notice how the Princess greets the messenger: 'Welcome, Marcadé, / But that thou interruptest our merriment' (v .ii.711-712).

Earlier in that extraordinarily long last scene – the longest in all of Shakespeare's plays – Boyet recounts what happened when he was trying to have a snooze:

BOYET. Under the cool shade of a sycamore  
I thought to close mine eyes some half an hour,  
When, lo, to interrupt my purposed rest,  
Toward that shade I might behold addressed  
The King and his companions.  
(v .ii.89-93)

Boyet prepares the way for the play's first inset show, the entrance of the King and his companions dressed as Muscovites: a sleep or a rest is interrupted by the appearance of disguised players. When, later in the scene, we get to the show of the Nine Worthies, the speeches of the performers are constantly interrupted by the facetious comments of the courtly spectators:

COSTARD. I Pompey am –  
BEROWNE. You lie, you are not he.  
COSTARD. I Pompey am –  
BOYET. With leopard's head on knee.

BEROWNE. Well said, old mocker: I must needs be friends with thee.  
COSTARD. I Pompey am, Pompey surnamed the Big.  
DUMAINE. The 'Great'.  
COSTARD. It is 'Great', sir: Pompey surnamed the Great.  
( v .ii.543-548)

This sort of banter goes on for 150 lines or so until Marcadé interrupts the whole show. It is the same kind of business that takes place in the Muscovite mask:

MOTH. All hail the richest beauties on the earth!  
BOYET. Beauties no richer than rich taffeta.  
MOTH. A holy parcel of the fairest dames  
(The Ladies turn their backs to him.)  
That ever turned their - backs - to mortal views.  
BEROWNE. Their eyes, villain, their eyes.  
MOTH. That ever turned their eyes to mortal views.  
Out -  
BOYET. True! Out indeed!  
MOTH. Out of your favours, heavenly spirits, vouchsafe  
Not to behold -  
BEROWNE. Once to behold, rogue!  
MOTH. Once to behold with your sun-beamed eyes -  
With your sun-beamed eyes -  
BOYET. They will not answer to that epithet.  
You were best call it 'daughter-beamed eyes'.  
MOTH. They do not mark me, and that brings me out.  
( v .ii.158-172)

The word Moth uses here, 'out', takes us back to Boyet's report of the rehearsal for the mask: 'And ever and anon they made a doubt / Presence majestic would put him out' ( v .ii.101-102). Here, 'to put someone out' means to cause someone to lose their self-possession, to disconcert or discompose themselves, to confuse or even to embarrass themselves, and, more specifically, to make them forget their lines in a play or a speech. It is the interruptions rather than the 'Presence majestic' that makes Moth lose his concentration and forget what it is that he is meant to say; the interruptions change the course and direction of the play. In the Muscovite mask and the



Show of the Nine Worthies, we have, then, a model for how interruption determines the play's plot or its narrative.

### III

Of course, much drama proceeds by interruption – every time a character comes on stage and speaks, that is, in a sense, an interruption; conversely, when characters leave the stage, the action takes on a new direction. (It's hard not to think here of *Waiting for Godot* and of Beckett's description of it as a play in two acts in which nothing happens twice.) But *Love's Labour's Lost* does something distinctive with this idea by associating the interruption with the breaking of vows.

The opening 120 or so lines of the play's first scene take us deep into the world of the French court, the King and his followers' strange decision to study, fast, sleep little and avoid the company of women for three years. Almost at once, as they read the articles that they are being asked to subscribe to, Berowne spots a flaw:

BEROWNE. ... Item, If any man be seen to talk with a woman within the term of three years, he shall endure such public shame as the rest of the court can possibly devise.

This article, my liege, yourself must break,  
For well you know here comes in embassy  
The French King's daughter with yourself to speak.  
(1.i.128-133)

Even before they have been able to begin it, the King and the courtiers' plan is to be interrupted by the arrival of the Princess and her ladies. The vows are to be broken before the courtiers have so much as signed the articles of agreement. The language in which all this is expressed is made clear in this first scene. Here, the article is to be broken ('yourself must break'); within twenty lines, we have

the same verb in use but now in company with a new one. The King says that the Princess 'must lie here on mere necessity', to which Berowne counters:

BEROWNE. Necessity will make us all forsworn  
Three thousand times within this three years' space  
[...]  
If I break faith, this word shall speak for me:  
I am forsworn 'on mere necessity'.  
So to the laws at large I write my name,  
And he that breaks them in the least degree  
Stands in attainder of eternal shame.  
( I .i.147-155)

In addition to the idea of breaking faith, we are given a new element: being forsworn or forswearing something. The word and its derivatives are relatively common in Shakespeare's writings, but they occur 22 times in *Love's Labour's Lost* ; in the play with the next highest number of forms of the word, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* , it is used only nine times. It seems that Shakespeare is particularly keen to draw attention to the word here. Throughout the rest of the play, people return again and again to the 'f' word, for example, when Nathaniel reads out loud Berowne's poem:

'If love make me forsworn, how shall I swear to love?  
Ah, never faith could hold, if not to beauty vowed.  
Though to myself forsworn, to thee I'll faithful prove.'  
( IV .ii.105-107)

or when Dumaine reads his sonnet:

Do not call it sin in me,  
That I am forsworn for thee.  
( IV .iii.112-113)

or as a passing comment: 'It is religion to be thus forsworn' (Berowne in IV .iii.337). It can also go together with the 'b' word, as it did in Berowne's speech in I. i. that I have already quoted, or in Longaville's sonnet:

Vows for thee broke deserve not punishment.  
A woman I forswore, but I will prove,  
Thou being a goddess, I forswore not thee  
[...]  
If broken then, it is no fault of mine;  
If by me broke, what fool is not so wise  
To lose an oath to win a paradise.  
( IV .iii.60-70)

What happens in the play is that men forswear ladies and sleep; instead, they swear to study and to fast; but in no time at all, they break their oaths and forswear their vows. The men try to argue their way out of what they have done, using all the power of rhetoric and logic that they can deploy. So, here, for example, the King tries to reason his way out of the position he is in: 'Rebuke me not for that which you provoke. / The virtue of your eye must break my oath' ( v .ii.347-348). In other words, it is her fault if he goes back over his promise not to fall in love with women. But just as they acknowledge their lack of good faith and try to make up for it, the King and the Lords show that they have learnt nothing from what they have done:

BEROWNE. Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,  
Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation,  
Figures pedantical: these summer-flies  
Have blown me full of maggot ostentation.  
I do forswear them.  
[...]  
My love to thee is sound, sans crack or flaw.  
ROSALINE. Sans 'sans', I pray you.  
( v .ii.406-416)

Even as they forswear things, the men break their oaths and vows. These are not the only things that get broken in the play. Midway through the play, the Princess intercepts a letter that Costard tells her is from Berowne to Rosaline – it turns out, of course, to be from Armado to Jaquenetta:

PRINCESS. O, thy letter, thy letter! He's a good friend of mine.  
(She takes the letter.)  
Stand aside, good bearer. Boyet, you can carve:  
Break up this capon.  
BOYET. I am bound to serve.  
(He examines the letter.)  
This letter is mistook; it importeth none here.  
It is writ to Jaquenetta.  
PRINCESS. We will read it, I swear.  
Break the neck of the wax, and everyone give ear.  
( IV. i.55-60)

To break up a capon is literally to carve a chicken, but a capon is also a love-letter and that can only be opened by breaking the capon's neck, that is, the wax seal that closes the letter. The seal on a letter is a mark of ownership as well as a way of securing privacy; it acts as a guarantee of both and as a sign of intimacy and trust between the person sending the letter and the person receiving it. For someone other than the intended recipient to break the seal, then, is to forswear a contractual relationship – in effect to break an oath. The Princess's hope that the letter will expose Rosaline's relationship with Berowne is not fulfilled and her party and the audience are left feeling that this strand of the play's plot is incomplete – that is: has been interrupted.

A different sort of breaking – a rather different one – is signalled when Costard (for it is he) enters in III .i. The page Moth exclaims 'A wonder, master! Here's a costard broken in a shin' ( III .i.67). Besides being the name of an apple, 'costard' was slang for a head; so Moth is saying that it is astonishing that a head has a wounded shin. But a further meaning is suggested by the rhyme that Costard speaks later in the same scene: 'I, Costard, running out, that was safely within, / Fell over the threshold, and broke my shin' ( III .i.113-114). There is a strong suggestion that Costard has been discovered and interrupted

having sex: he was 'safely within', but stumbled over the threshold – he was nearly there, but something stopped him doing what he had in mind.

Without building too much on this characteristically obscure but suggestive set of remarks, one might take the idea of being interrupted while having sex or just of sexual frustration as characteristic of the play. The King and his courtiers vow to cut themselves off from women; beautiful women of the right kind then turn up; it all looks as though the comedy will end, as it naturally should, in marriage, until Marcadé arrives with his news of death and the play's resolution is deferred just as the men and women's marriages and promised gratification are postponed. The readers and the audience thought they were going to see a play in which the natural expectation is that men and women will pair off to marry and to produce babies, but they do not – the clue that this will not happen is, of course, in the play's title.

## IV

The breaking or forswearing of both physical and abstract things signifies interruption and incompleteness. There is one more sort of breaking to which I should like to draw attention. As the disguised lords and the masked ladies converse apart in v .i, Rosaline suddenly brings the encounters to an abrupt end: 'Not one word more, my maids; break off, break off' ( v .ii.262). Under 'to break off', the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites this very passage from the play and gives the definition here of 'To leave off or stop abruptly'. The *Dictionary*'s first citation is a medieval one; its second is, appropriately enough, the passage describing *aposiopesis* from Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* that I have already quoted: 'when we begin to speake a thing,

and breake of in the middle way, as if either it needed no further to be spoken of, or that we were ashamed, or afraide to speake it out.' The sudden ending of this part of the courtship is a sort of *aposiopesis*, an abrupt ending where a successful conclusion is not allowed. I should have thought more about those four words 'break off, break off'. They are the only time in all of Shakespeare's works that he uses 'break off' in this repeated form. No other contemporary of his does so and, in fact, as far as I or the LION database can tell, the next time they come together in this way is at the moment in Milton's masque when Comus hurriedly brings the dance of his unruly followers to an end before the Lady enters: 'Break off, break off, I feel the different pace / Of som chast footing neer about this ground.' <sup>8</sup> Milton did not need to have read *Love's Labour's Lost* (though he may well have done) to borrow these words from it. But the echo highlights the way in which the closure of this part of the scene in Shakespeare's play is marked. Rosaline tells her maids to 'break off, break off' and the King and his party leave the stage.

The instruction is a deliberately abrupt way of stopping things – a command followed by an exit. We can see the same thing happening elsewhere in the play. Shakespeare does not repeat the formula but uses another one that occurs fairly regularly elsewhere in his work. 'Come, Jaquenetta, away', Dull tells her just before they leave in the play's second scene ( I .ii.139); under ten lines later Moth addresses Costard, 'Come, you transgressing slave, away!' ( I .ii.148), and in due course they depart. The word 'away' is a good means for getting people off the stage and also for ending scenes, as when Holofernes invites Dull to dinner and says 'Away, the gentles are at their game and we will to our recreation' ( IV. ii.162), or when Holofernes prepares Dull (him again) for the masque of the Nine Worthies, saying 'Most Dull, honest Dull! To our sport, away!' (V.i.147). A more



striking version of this comes nearly at the end of IV.iii., when the King and his lords have agreed to pursue the women:

KING. Away, away! No time shall be omitted  
That will betime and may by us be fitted.  
BEROWNE. Allons, allons!  
( IV .iii.355)

‘Away, away ... *Allons , allons* ’ have something of the same force and use the same repeated form as ‘Break off, break off’.

At the end of the play, it is to the same word that Berowne and the Princess both return:

BEROWNE. Worthies, away! The scene begins to cloud  
[...]  
KING. How fares your majesty?  
PRINCESS. Boyet, prepare. I will away tonight.  
( v. ii.716-721)

The scene begins to cloud and the play breaks off with the Princess and her ladies’ departure before we can know what will happen at the end of it all. The play does not come to a conclusion; rather, as with so many scenes, it simply stops.

We are prepared for this by the play’s title (which I shall come back to), but also something that is, I think, worth pausing over. We are familiar with the idea that watching a play or a film is quite different from reading a novel, say, in that unless the spectator has been checking a watch, we have no idea when a film or a play will end, whereas we can see the end of a novel approaching as the pages on the right-hand side of the book diminish. However, the monstrously long second scene of Act 5, the longest scene Shakespeare ever wrote, signals that we are approaching the end, not just because of its length, but by its repetition of the word ‘end’. The best-known instance of this device elsewhere in Shakespeare is probably in the last scene of *King Lear* when Kent asks: ‘Is this the promised end?’

The word 'end' or 'ends' occurs in *Love's Labour's Lost* nine times in v .ii, and another four times in v. i, more than in the last scenes of any other play by Shakespeare – 'end' and 'ended' occur eight times in the last two scenes of *Cymbeline*, the play with the largest number of comparable occurrences in the canon. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, this is partly a function of the length of the last act as a whole. However, what is striking is not the sheer number of uses of the word that Shakespeare puts before us, but their significance. When the King implores the Princess 'Now, at the latest minute of the hour, / Grant us your loves', she replies: 'A time, methinks, too short / To make a world-without-end bargain in' ( v .ii.781-783). A 'world-without-end bargain' is a contract that goes on for ever and ever, one that is never interrupted, never broken. There is something slightly specious about this; the Princess is thinking of marriage, of course, which does come to an end – death makes certain of that. A few lines later, Maria seems to raise Longaville's hopes by telling him that 'At the twelvemonth's end / I'll change my black gown for a faithful friend' ( v .ii.821-822). A little later the point is made in this exchange:

BEROWNE. Our wooing doth not end like an old play:  
Jack hath not Jill. These ladies' courtesy  
Might well have made our sport a comedy.  
KING. Come, sir, it wants a twelvemonth and a day,  
And then 'twill end.  
( v .ii.862-866)

Armado likewise promises that the conclusion is on its way: 'will you hear the dialogue that the two learned men have compiled in praise of the owl and the cuckoo? It should have followed in the end of our show' ( v .ii.873-876). The pair of poems that conclude the play replace narrative action with lyrical stasis; plot is overthrown by contemplative meditation on the seasons. But the poems also do

something else. For all of the play's brilliant wit and jokes, its ingenious playing with language and clever rhetoric, for all of what Berowne earlier called 'Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise, / Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation, / Figures pedantical' ( v .ii.406-408), we are left with animal noises, the sound of the cuckoo, "Cuckoo, / Cuckoo, cuckoo!" O, word of fear, / Unpleasing to a married ear', and of the staring owl, "Tu-whit, Tu-who!" / A merry note' ( v. ii. 877-878, 897-898, 906-907, 915-916).

Language may go in one direction towards the most sophisticated expression of thought and emotion, but 'that way' may be instantly subverted by the inarticulate, incomprehensible sounds of the natural world - 'this way'.

There is a difference between giving a play or a story an ending and stopping it; *Love's Labour's Lost* does not have an ending, it ends.

## V

It has, however, got a distinctive and unusual beginning. It starts in a very definite way:

KING. Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives,  
Live registered upon our brazen tombs,  
And then grace us in the disgrace of death;  
When, spite of cormorant devouring time,  
Th'endeavour of this present breath may buy  
That honour which shall bate his scythe's keen edge,  
And make us heirs of all eternity.  
Therefore, brave conquerors - for so you are,  
That war against your own affections  
And the huge army of the world's desires -  
Our late edict shall strongly stand in force.  
Navarre shall be the wonder of the world,  
Our court shall be a little academe,  
Still and contemplative in living art.  
( 1 .i.1-14)

Hearing or reading all this for the first time, it is pretty hard to make much sense of it: there is an awful lot to take in and, like so much else in the play, while the language is striking and beautiful, its meaning is not easily grasped. However, the opening lines form a distinct unit of thought; immediately after them, the King abandons this train of thought, turning to and naming his companions ('You, three Berowne, Dumaine and Longaville'), giving us something solid to hold on to. Yet in spite of all their wilful obscurity, the King's opening lines have a clear structure. He starts with the imperative 'Let'; no other play by Shakespeare starts in this way and in the whole of the canon of nearly 800 scenes, only seven begin with the word. On the other hand, 'The Phoenix and Turtle' opens with the injunction 'Let the bird of loudest lay' and four of the Sonnets begin with the verb, most famously, of course, in number 116, 'Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments'. The relationship between the fourteen lines of the opening part of the King's speech and the Sonnets is worth pausing over. The structure of his speech can be seen more clearly by reducing it to two words: 'Let ... therefore'.

The play begins with a sort of syllogism, since *a* is so, therefore we shall do *b*. We are introduced in the first speech to a world of logic in which agreed facts have certain definite consequences. The structure of the King's speech is like that of Sonnet 105:

Let not my love be called idolatry,  
Nor my beloved as an idol show,  
Since all alike my songs and praises be  
To one, of one, still such, and ever so.  
Kind is my love today, tomorrow kind,  
Still constant in a wondrous excellence.  
Therefore my verse, to constancy confined,  
One thing expressing, leaves out difference.  
'Fair, kind, and true' is all my argument,

'Fair, kind, and true' varying to other words,  
And in this change is my invention spent,  
Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords.  
Fair, kind, and true have often lived alone,  
Which three till now never kept seat in one.

The speech and the poem are not identical – the Sonnet's change of direction really comes in line 9 which begins the sestet; the 'Therefore' in the Sonnet comes in line 7 and in line 8 in the speech – but they share an appearance of logical, ordered thought and it is not hard to pair the speech's last line 'Still and contemplative in living art' with the Sonnet's 'Still constant in a wondrous excellence'.

The way the play opens is important because, like the Sonnet, it sets up a structure that is meant to suggest that the world works through logic and necessity – that it represents a clockwork system in which certain conditions produce certain results: 'Let ... therefore'. Of course, the truth is that the King's well-regulated court is nothing of the kind. Not only are the King and his companions unable to keep their oaths, but they cannot enforce their system of discipline, their sense of how the world should be ordered on the other characters, notably Armado, Costard and Jaquenetta. Courtly idealism is subverted by the realities of life: 'necessity' really does make them all forsworn.

The King has a mechanical view of life and of the world as if it should work by clockwork and if it does not, then it must be made to do so. But human nature and life are not like this. One image of this is provided by Berowne who is wonderfully sceptical about such idealism:

BEROWNE. What? I love, I sue, I seek a wife?  
A woman, that is like a German clock,  
Still a-repairing, ever out of frame  
And never going aright, being a watch,

But being watched that it may still go right!  
( III .i.184-188)

Of course, the passage is offensive about women, but it also tells a truth about clocks (and not just German ones): they do not work; they are unreliable and do not tell you the time. It is partly because their mechanical workings are inadequate to the task, but also because time itself – ‘cormorant devouring time’ – cannot be measured in this way. Rather, Spring’s song shows us how this should be done: ‘When shepherds pipe on oaten straws, / And merry larks are ploughmen’s clocks...’ ( v .ii.891-892). But even the poems at the end of the play are infected by a consequentialist structure of ‘When ... Then ...’, setting up an apparently logical sequence.

Yet the play insists and shows us that the world does not work like this. Besides logic, grammar is consequently undermined; Latin grammar should provide us with a clockwork way of organising the world and our understanding of it. By conjugating verbs and declining nouns, we bring order to chaos. But the play shows that grammar and rhetoric, which should do the same sort of thing, bring more confusion and result in nonsense. Human nature and life are utterly unpredictable, subject to ‘such eruptions and sudden breaking-out of mirth’ as Armado describes to Holofernes ( v. i.105-108) or to the unprepared-for appearance of death in the figure of Marcadé. The play itself is an object lesson in how our expectation of a clockwork plot can be defied and overthrown.

## VI

At the end of the play, the audience may be left with the hope that, in a year, or a year and a day, the lovers will get together again, but really there can be no guarantee or assurance that this will happen.



The tasks the ladies set the men – the King to a hermitage, Dumaine and Longaville to uncertainty, Berowne to a hospital – may hint at a future happy resolution but do not promise it. Much can happen in the allotted time and the men who have shown themselves incapable of keeping an oath or a vow must be judged unlikely to do what they are obliged to do by the women. However, the play's title, *Love's Labour's Lost*, suggests that things are worse than that – the labour (or labours) of love and of the lovers are not just left unrewarded; they are entirely lost.

I still think that this rather dark interpretation of the play's ending is right. It is as if all that we have seen or read could be thrown away or, more appropriately perhaps, kissed away. The play shows us that vows are made of words and that words are just breath or vapour. This painful truth extends to the play itself, which is made up of words that are just as empty and ephemeral, just as meaningless, as the words the characters in it utter. We watch a play which comes to a conclusion in which nothing is concluded; it ends but has no ending, other than by being interrupted. The dominant moment in the play, Marcadé's arrival, still sends a shiver down the spine; it is a perfect example of an *aposiopesis* – but so is the play as a whole.

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## NOTES

1. William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. H.R. Woudhuysen, The Arden Shakespeare, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, London, Thomson Learning, 1998; all quotations are from this edition.
2. A.E. Housman, *The Name and Nature of Poetry*, Cambridge, CUP, 1933, p. 46-47.
3. William Shakespeare, *A pleasant conceited comedie called, Loues labors lost*, London, by W.W. for Cuthbert Burby, 1598, sig. I3v.

4. William Shakespeare, *Lvcrece*, London, Richard Field for Iohn Harrison, 1594, sig. F1r (lines 666-7).
  5. George Puttenham, *The arte of English poesie*, London, Richard Field, 1589, sig. T4r.
  6. See, for example, Gabriel Harvey, *Pierces supererogation*, London, John Wolfe, 1593, sig. Z4v.
  7. Ben Jonson, *The comicall satyre of euery man out of his humor*, London, William Holme, 1600.
  8. John Milton, *A maske presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634*, London, Humphrey Robinson, 1637, sig. A3v (lines 145-6).
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## ABSTRACTS

Taking as a starting point an editor's experience of making choices for punctuating Marcadé's aposiopesis in V.ii, this paper extends the reflection to interruption or break (of syntax, of vows, of time, etc.) as an underlying principle in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Running against the mechanical 'Let / therefore' logic of the King's opening lines, the entire play proves an object lesson in how our expectation of a clockwork plot can be defied and overthrown.

Partant de l'expérience de l'éditeur confronté à des choix de ponctuation pour l'aposiopèse de Marcadé en V.ii, cet article étend la réflexion à l'interruption ou à la rupture (de syntaxe, de vœux, du temps, etc.) comme principe constitutif de *Peines d'amour perdues*. À l'encontre de la logique mécanique (« Que / donc ») des premiers vers du Roi, la pièce toute entière s'avère un cas d'école pour défier et démonter notre attente d'une intrigue réglée comme une montre.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** édition, aposiopèse, rhétorique, ponctuation, Puttenham George, rupture, fin  
**Keywords:** dash, editing, rhetoric, punctuation, *Love's Labour's Lost*, Marcadé, interruption, Puttenham George

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# L'éloge paradoxal

"Born to make black fair"

*Paradoxical Encomium*

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# Lady Rosaline's Darkness: Linguistic Games and Deep Meanings

Camilla Caporicci

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Behind its lively love stories, *Love's Labour's Lost* conceals an extremely dense and controversial subtext. Rather than attempt a topical reading of the play – a not uncommon approach to the analysis of this difficult text<sup>1</sup> –, this paper aims to show the aesthetic and philosophical complexity of Shakespeare's discourse, one that conveys, through a particularly sophisticated and sometimes paradoxical language, deeply innovative meanings.

By focusing the attention on the play's main processes, it is possible to notice two strictly related passages, both of which find their main symbol in the darkness of Lady Rosaline. From an aesthetic and poetic standpoint, Shakespeare makes Rosaline's darkness the rock on which the traditional Petrarchan lyric founders. Through a subtle, effervescently ironic discourse, the falsifying character of the Petrarchan rhetorical language is revealed, while the Neo-platonic ideal at the basis of the sonnet tradition, chromatically characterized as luminous and white, crashes against the obscure materiality of the lady's body. Concurrently, the exceptionally complex linguistic game through which Shakespeare ambiguously

intertwines light and darkness throughout the text expresses the play's ontological and epistemological discovery, one that is embedded in the new sensibility rising in Europe at the end of the sixteenth century.

## “The mind shall banquet, though the body pine”: The Dichotomous Worldview

*Love's Labour's Lost* opens with the King of Navarre proclaiming his plan to acquire semi-divine knowledge and status through the renunciation of bodily pleasures and vile earthly passions. Through this war against human affections and “the huge army of the world's desires,”<sup>2</sup> the king hopes to annihilate the distracting and degrading influence of the flesh; in quite paradigmatic words, he exclaims, “The mind shall banquet, though the body pine” (I.i.25). By opening the play with such a clear programmatic statement, Shakespeare evidently aims to immediately link the king's initial worldview with the ontological and epistemological paradigm dominant in the Renaissance: a paradigm essentially based on the principle of hierarchical dichotomy. The dualistic opposition of spiritual and material planes informed every aspect of Renaissance thought, from the ontological and epistemological reflection to the concept of man and of art. In this context, the perpetual struggle between soul and body represents the axiom upon which the concept of man was built, affirming the unmistakable superiority of the spiritual and thinking entity over the material and physical one. This dichotomous worldview found its basis in both the theological and the philosophical paradigm of the period, grounded on a deeply Christianized combination of Stoicism and Neo-Platonism. While the Protestant anthropological pessimism<sup>3</sup> and the Stoic ideal do not

appear to play a crucial role in the king's vision, Neo-Platonism seems more influential. Neo-Platonism, in the Christianized form elaborated by Ficino's Florentine Academia, is much more optimistic than Puritanism and Stoicism about man's possibilities of perfection, and considers the human being a wonderful creature, a "great miracle,"<sup>4</sup> but only insofar as he chooses to transcend his most corporeal self and become an angelic mind by following the light of his pure intellect. Reaffirming a conflict that can be traced back to Plato's *Phaedrus*, the Neo-Platonic body does not play a significant role in the realization of the most authentic nature of man because, as Giovanni Betussi affirms, "l'anima è l'uomo, ed in quella consiste la vera bellezza. Ed il corpo è la sua prigione ed il suo sepolcro."<sup>5</sup> As Ficino writes, the soul needs to detach itself from the body and adhere to the divine; only in so doing will it truly become *copula mundi*.<sup>6</sup>

This dichotomous and vertically oriented worldview, particularly in its Neo-Platonic interpretation, is undoubtedly the foundation of the king of Navarre's initial project. Through very meaningful terms, the king envisions the creation of a "little academe" (I.i.13), the "wonder of the world" (I.i.12). Its members shall be "mortified" (I.i.28), dead in their bodies and to the world's gross pleasures, and "living in philosophy" (I.i.32). In order to acquire true knowledge – which is significantly defined as an "angel" (I.i.113) – the mind needs to detach itself from the vile body and its desires, especially in their sensual connotation. Upon the arrival of the dames of France, however, this plan is soon revealed to be fallacious. The passion that the women inspire in the young men obliges them to admit that they are made of "flesh and blood" (IV.iii.213), and therefore unable to annihilate their sensual desires, thus revealing the inconsistency of man's ideal as free from his bodily aspects.



## Lady Rosaline's Darkness

Connected to the play's ontological discovery, Shakespeare calls into question the artistic and linguistic problem inherent in the language the men use to give voice to their newly kindled passion: the language of Petrarchan poetry. Petrarchan poetry, the Renaissance's most prominent poetic genre, is based on the same Christian and Neo-Platonic worldview that informs the ontological and epistemological paradigm of the period: on both a philosophical and artistic level, it presents a marked tendency towards the "ideal". The eulogistic and precious language through which this poetry celebrates the beloved aims to create a poetic object that, in leaving behind all the darkness of the material world, deviates from the natural being to embody the purity of the Neo-Platonic ideal. The falsification implicit in such a representation of reality is often the subject of Shakespeare's reflection. In many of his plays, and especially in his sonnets, Shakespeare meditates about the ethical problem posed by the language through which the celebrative praise is conveyed. Of particular interest to him was the implicit act of dishonesty that this language performs in the moment in which it gives birth to idealized figures, abstracted from the real objects they pretend to represent. In *Love's Labour's Lost* the main instrument of this criticism is irony. All the noble youths express their love through Petrarchan language, sometimes even in actual sonnets. However, the ladies to whom this language is directed do not appreciate a rhetoric that does not reflect their true nature. During her first appearance on the stage, the princess criticises the falsification inherent in the eulogistic Petrarchan praise: "my beauty, though but mean, / Needs not the painted flourish of your praise" (II.i.13-14). She also derides the mercenary character of this

praise by playing on the chromatic opposition of fair and foul, thus reinforcing, as we shall see, the play's main symbolic discourse. To the Forester who calls her "fair", she first asks that he not "paint" her, affirming that she will give "fair payment for foul words" (IV.i.19). Next, she laughs at the praise that the Forester directs to her after taking the money, by acknowledging the hypocrisy implicit in a language that calls fair what is, in fact, foul in order to please the addressee: "O heresy in fair, fit for these days - / A giving hand, though foul, shall have fair praise" (IV.i.22-23). Recognizing the conventionality of the love verses, the French ladies define these verses as "A huge translation of hypocrisy" (V.ii.51). They perceive that this language, which is based on "Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise, / Three-piled hyperboles" (V.ii.406-407), celebrates an archetype that has nothing to do with their individual persons. For this reason, they refuse to accept the young men's courtship with an otherwise unaccountable obstinacy.

Not all the ladies, however, are equally falsified by the Petrarchan rhetoric. The one who is more severely betrayed by this eulogistic language is dark Rosaline. By presenting a lady on stage whose main characteristic is darkness, and by making of this darkness the center of the comedy's chromatic discourse, Shakespeare aims to give visual and symbolic representation to the play's main issues. Both the ontological and epistemological problem that Shakespeare addresses from the very beginning, along with his discussion of the Petrarchan model, are presented from a chromatic standpoint, in terms of a contrast between light and darkness.<sup>7</sup> This approach finds its *raison d'être* in the Renaissance chromatic universe. To the paradigm based on the hierarchically structured opposition of spiritual and material planes - which constitutes the foundation of the king's worldview and the Petrarchan ideal alike - corresponded

a universe equally contrasted with colour, based on the antagonism of white and black and the Neo-Platonic ladder of light. Originally grounded on the colour symbolism of Christian theology, according to which “white and black formed a pair of opposites and often represented the coloured expression of Good and Evil,”<sup>8</sup> the colour code associating light with the divine realm and black with the postlapsarian world of matter and flesh, acquired even more importance during the Renaissance.<sup>9</sup> In this period, the moral and mystical values attributed to white and black, and to light and darkness, were strengthened by the rebirth of Platonism in the form elaborated by Ficino. According to this doctrine, light is the perfect expression of the Good and “vinculum universi.”<sup>10</sup>

For this reason, the Neo-Platonic ideal celebrated by the Petrarchan language is rigidly codified in terms of colour. Beauty, God’s manifestation that radiates into the world, is considered a ray of incorporeal light that must remain separated from the darkness of matter, because it loses much of its dignity when joined with it.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, in accordance with the Neo-Platonic definition of *Amore Celeste* and *Amore Volgare*, light and the colour white become the symbol of chaste and incorporeal love, while bestial, earthly lust is painted black, the dense and heavy colour of the sinful flesh. Consequently, the ideal lady must be as pure as snow, with shining hair, beaming sun-like eyes, and with a luminous soul that, in Castiglione’s words, “col suo lume vince le tenebre del corpo.”<sup>12</sup>

The idealization of the lady and the sublimation of her physical aspect is obtained through a sort of “whitening”, a process through which the heavily dark body is purified and made insubstantial by endowing it with a translucent, light nature.

Given the importance of this chromatic characterization of the lady, Shakespeare’s repeated insistence on Rosaline’s darkness reveals his

intention of challenging both the aesthetic and philosophical basis of Petrarchan and Neo-Platonic paradigms through the lady's colour. Rosaline, one of the main antecedents of the *Sonnets'* Dark Lady,<sup>13</sup> is a negation of the traditional stereotype. She is a woman not at all fair and chaste; instead, she is dark and full of passion, "With two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes - / Ay, and, by heaven, one that will do the deed / Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard" (III.i.192-194). The darkness of the body's materiality asserts the natural and realistic corporeality of the woman, who breaks away from the abstract image of the Petrarchan and Neo-Platonic airy lady. However, Berowne<sup>14</sup> fails to understand and properly appreciate the deep value of Rosaline's darkness, and tries therefore to court her through canonical praise. She is called "Celestial" (IV.ii.117), "heavenly Rosaline", and is traditionally compared to a "sun that maketh all things shine" (IV.iii.244). Berowne writes sonnets to her in the highest Petrarchan style and addresses them "To the snow-white hand of the most beauteous Lady Rosaline" (IV.ii.130-131). But the sublimating Petrarchan rhetoric, the target of Shakespeare's polemic, fails to conquer the lady, who cannot recognize herself in the ideal image that the poetry conveys through standardized (in both chromatic and rhetorical terms) praise. For this reason, she is the most angry and obstinate of all, because she is the one who has been most deeply betrayed by her suitor's "whitening" rhetoric. Dark as she is, Rosaline has to read a sonnet in which she is described, or rather "painted", as "the fairest goddess on the ground. / I am compared to twenty thousand fairs. / O, he hath drawn my picture in his letter". This picture is not faithful at all to the original. "Any thing like?", the Princess asks. "Nothing in the praise" (V.ii.36-40), answers Rosaline, but only, ironically, in the black colour of the ink: "Beauteous as ink - a good conclusion"

(V.ii.41). Rosaline feels that Berowne's love is as conventional as the language through which he expresses it, and that he is not ready to acknowledge her divergence from the ideal. It is precisely for this reason that, in a cruelly ironic moment of revenge, she decides to treat him as the traditional Petrarchan lover he seems willing to impersonate: "I would make him fawn, and beg, and seek, / And wait the season, and observe the times, / And spend his prodigal wits in bootless rhymes, / And shape his service wholly to my hests, / And make him proud to make me proud that jests! / So pursuivant-like would I o'ersway his state / That he should be my fool, and I his fate" (V.ii.62-68).<sup>15</sup>

## "A light condition in a beauty dark": A Paradoxical Beauty

Even though Berowne appears not to understand the deep value of Rosaline's darkness, and does not renounce the falsifying Petrarchan rhetoric until the very end,<sup>16</sup> the language used by both her suitor and the other characters in some sections of the play to describe Rosaline is particularly interesting. By analyzing this language closely, it is possible to notice how the chromatic terms referring to the lady give way to one of the play's most meaningful images: an extremely complex linguistic game in which the colour paradox is generated by the constant ambiguous intertwining of black and white, light and darkness. The first example of this can be found in the language used by the young detractors of the dark lady. After having linked, according to the traditional chromatic symbolism, the colour black – "thy love is black as ebony" (IV.iii. 245) – with the most negative aspects of reality – "Black is the badge of hell, / The hue of dungeons and the style of night, / And beauty's crest becomes

the heavens well” (IV.iii. 252-254) –, the king and his friends appear to unconsciously produce images in which the orthodox dichotomy begins to vacillate through an oxymoronic clash of light and darkness. In particular, the paradoxical nature of a light that coincides with darkness – an image that will prove to be the heart of one of the play’s deepest meanings – is expressed through highly evocative words: “O paradox! [...] Dark needs no candles now, for dark is light” (IV.iii. 252 and 267).

A similar oxymoronic encounter of opposite chromatic values appears in the words Berowne uses to defend his beloved from his friends’ derision. Even though his celebration of the dark beauty does not truly differ from the traditional one, as it “idolizes” the black colour through a rhetoric quite similar to that proper to the Petrarchan poetry, yet the paradoxical images of light/white and darkness/black convey a meaning that goes beyond Berowne’s explicit and intentional message. In lines that strongly remind us of the sonnets to the *Dark Lady*, Berowne proclaims that the novel beauty of the colour black is a sign of the artificial falsification of traditional beauty: “O, if in black my lady’s brows be decked, / It mourns that painting and usurping hair / Should ravish doters with a false aspect, / And therefore is she born to make black fair” (IV.iii.256-259). Moreover, through an image that the king defines as a “paradox”, he exalts his lady’s complexion by swearing that “No face is fair that is not full so black” <sup>17</sup> (IV.iii.256-259). The clash of terms referring to the opposite semantic fields of light/white and darkness/black increases the impression of paradoxical chromatic confusion that runs throughout the play’s imagery.

Contextually, the princess gives voice to a similar paradox when describing her friend. While the other ladies are, in their lovers’ words, “light in the light” (II.i.199), <sup>18</sup> Katherine defines Rosaline

with a very peculiar image that reverses this eulogistic monochromatic pun. Inserted in an effervescent dialogue based entirely on the oxymoronic encounter of terms referring to light and darkness – displayed in a variety of metaphorical, mostly sensual, senses<sup>19</sup> – this image appears particularly significant. While the sexual innuendos conveyed by the idea of a “light wench” doing things “in the dark” subtly reassert the distance of Lady Rosaline from the chaste and spiritual Neo-Platonic ideal, the language through which she is described wittingly plays on the different meanings of the term “light”, so that the chromatic one becomes predominant within the specific context of the phrase: “a light condition in a beauty dark” (V.ii.20). The paradox of “light in darkness”, as opposed to the concept of “light in the light”, is thus personified in Rosaline, who seems to embody a new symbolic relationship between the two opposed elements.

## “Light in darkness lies”: A Novel Epistemology

By opposing the standardized model of the Petrarchan poetry, Rosaline’s darkness appears to affirm the necessity for a return to the authenticity and materiality of the body, the fleshy obscurity of which asserts itself against the white purity of the sublimated Neo-Platonic ideal. This is not, though, the only reason why Rosaline’s darkness should be considered as the symbolic heart of the play. In fact, this darkness corresponds to the play’s epistemological discovery: the impossibility that true knowledge can be obtained through the annihilation of man’s “dark parts”, body and passion. While the acknowledgment of the darkness proper to the body sanctions the rightful existence of the realm of matter and flesh, the



epistemological project with which the play opens is revealed to be impossible to carry out without the direct experience of the material world's darkness. This epistemological revolution is crystallized in a splendid image that, by making use of the novel chromatic imagery employed in describing Rosaline, creates a deep bond between the novel knowledge and the new lady. Just as authentic love can only be reached through Rosaline's dark beauty, true knowledge can only be obtained by seeking the rays hidden in the darkness of matter, not by denying the body and the material world, nor by directly observing light through reason's light:

Why, all delights are vain, but that most vain  
Which, with pain purchased, doth inherit pain;  
As painfully to pore upon a book  
To seek the light of truth while truth the while  
Doth falsely blind the eyesight of his look.  
Light, seeking light, doth light of light beguile;  
So ere you find where light in darkness lies  
Your light grows dark by losing of your eyes. (I.i.72-79)

The shift from the kind of ascetic knowledge initially proposed by the king, to be obtained through a "still and contemplative" (I.i.14) attitude that excludes any earthly passion, to the new epistemology, is conveyed through a complex chromatic discourse that calls into question the absolute separation of light – the Neo-Platonic symbol of both the instrument and the object of true knowledge – from darkness – the visual representation of the flesh's earthly ignorance and sinfulness. This shift can be seen as embedded into a novel sensibility, rising in Europe at the end of the sixteenth century. This multifaceted current of thought, to which artists and thinkers such as Caravaggio, Galileo and Giordano Bruno contributed, claimed the necessity of a return to the natural and non-hierarchical world of matter – in ontological, epistemological and aesthetic terms – and often expressed this through a novel use of light and darkness.<sup>20</sup>

Without attempting here a study of this innovative approach to reality and its chromatic symbolism, the analysis of Shakespeare's paradoxical language appears, in this sense, paradigmatic. The vertiginous linguistic game created by the vortex of intertwined images of light and darkness, sight and blindness, is one of the most powerful expressions of Shakespeare's symbolic luminism. The terms are carefully arranged to create an almost symmetric intersection that exemplifies the interchangeable nature of the traditionally opposed entities, giving birth to paradoxical images such as that of "light in darkness" and "dark light". This imagery, which will also appear in the words that Berowne chooses to mockingly address Rosaline – "When we greet, / With eyes' best seeing, heaven's fiery eye, / By light we lose light" (V.ii.374-376) –, covertly conveys an important meaning. True knowledge cannot be found by looking at the direct source of light, which would make men blind, but only by experiencing with our entire being, body and mind alike, the obscurity of the world, or, as Giordano Bruno would say, "sub umbra". The "light of truth" will then be discovered in the black eyes of a dark lady, the objective counterpart of this novel epistemology: "Study his bias leaves, and makes his book thine eyes, / Where all those pleasures live that art would comprehend. / If knowledge be the mark, to know thee shall suffice" (IV.ii.110-112).

The heart of the play thus appears to be a paradox: the paradox of light in darkness, fairness in blackness. This is expressed in a chromatic language that reflects through a game of multiple mirrors a frenetic and destabilizing alternation of black and white, both in conveying the novel epistemological path and in describing lady Rosaline. True knowledge is expressed in this paradox –"light in darkness lies" (I.i.78) – as opposed to the equally paradoxical image of the "light in light" generating blindness. Contextually, the lady

through whom this knowledge can be reached is as dark as the body of the world, and endowed with a beauty that, being the physical incarnation of this paradox, is the shining of light within obscurity – “A light condition in a beauty dark” (V.ii.20) – opposed to the Neo-Platonic lady who is “light in the light” (II.i.199). By using this particular imagery and endowing it with such a deep meaning, Shakespeare demonstrates his awareness not only of the prevailing ontological and aesthetic Renaissance paradigm, but also of the most controversial currents of thought of his time. These same paradoxical images of a shining darkness are hidden in the deepest and most obscure folds of Renaissance thought: not only in Bruno’s heretic writings but also in the mysteries of alchemy and mystique.

<sup>21</sup> As for poetry, this same paradoxical concept will prove particularly dear to some of the contemplative poets of the seventeenth century, including Lord Herbert of Cherbury. Only a few years after Shakespeare, he will write splendid poems where the celebration of a dark beauty shining with inner light – “shining light in darkness” <sup>22</sup> – paves the way to a deep reflection on the mystical value of darkness, which finds in the oxymoron of the luminous blackness – “thy blackness is a spark / Of light inaccessible” <sup>23</sup> – its most fascinating symbol. <sup>24</sup>

## Conclusion

The analysis of Shakespeare’s chromatic discourse in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* reveals a deep and controversial meaning concealed under exceptionally complex and refined linguistic games. Starting from the “orthodox” opposition of light/white and darkness/black, Shakespeare calls into question the hierarchical nature of this conflict, thus asserting a new relation between the two opposed

values that amounts to their coexistence through the paradox of a darkness generating light, or a light in darkness. By making this paradox one of the play's main symbols, and by drawing a clear parallel between Rosaline's chromatic revolution and the epistemological one, Shakespeare challenges the traditional dichotomous worldview in both its poetic and ontological implications, thus revealing the deep modernity of his aesthetic and philosophical thought.

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## NOTES

1. See for instance Frances Yates, *A Study of Love's Labour's Lost*, Cambridge, CUP, 1936. Yates interprets the play as a veiled attack against the circle of intellectuals gathered around Sir Walter Raleigh, allegedly known as the "School of Night". She also individuates in the text references to John Florio, George Chapman and Giordano Bruno.
2. William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery, eds., *The Oxford Shakespeare. The Complete Works*, 2nd edition, Oxford, OUP, 2005, I.i.9-10. All following quotations from the play will be from this edition.
3. The Protestant anthropological pessimism, inherited from St. Augustine and patristic writers, individuates in the human flesh the dark mark of the original sin. As Alistair Fox writes: "At the heart of Elizabethan Protestantism lay a deepened sense of human sinfulness [...] [which] sprang from the Calvinist conviction that human nature was inherently depraved" (Alistair Fox, *The English Renaissance. Identity and Representation in Elizabethan England*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1997, p. 61).
4. This definition of man, attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, is expressed by Pico della Mirandola at the beginning of his *Oratio De Hominis Dignitate*. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oratio De Hominis Dignitate*, in Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *De Hominis Dignitate, Heptaplus, De Ente et Uno*, Eugenio Garin, ed., Torino, Nino Aragno Editore, 2004, p. 103.
5. (Because man is his soul, and in that consists true beauty. And the body is his prison and his sepulchre) Giovanni Betussi, *Il Raverta*, in Giuseppe Zonta, ed., *Trattati d'amore del Cinquecento*, Bari, Laterza, 1968, p. 20.

6. Marsilio Ficino, *Theologiae Platonicae, de immortalitate animorum* , in Marsilio Ficino, *Opera Omnia* , 2 vols, Torino, Bottega d'Erasmus, 1962, vol. 1, p. 151.
7. For a study of the rhetoric of colours in the play, see: Armelle Sabatier, “The Rhetoric of Colours in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* ”, in Delphine Lemonnier-Textier and Guillaume Winter, eds., *Lectures de Love’s Labour’s Lost de William Shakespeare*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014, p.117-132.
8. Michel Pastoureau, *Black. The History of a Color* , trans. by Jody Gladding, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 39.
9. As Linda Van Norden writes: “ In the Renaissance, then – even the late Renaissance – black and the entire color spectrum were studied almost as variously as Bible texts had been throughout the Middle Ages, and on a similar scale of meaning. Black, white, and the hues were phenomena to be explained physically, but they spoke, as well, a language to be understood morally, or mythologically, or mystically” (Linda Van Norden, *The Black Feet of the Peacock. The Color-Concept “Black” from the Greeks through the Renaissance* , ed. John Pollock, Ithaca, New York and London, University of America Press, 1985, p. 9).
10. (tie of the universe.) Marsilio Ficino, *Liber De Lumine* , in Marsilio Ficino, *op. cit.* , vol. 1, p. 1010. Ficino dedicates several works to the study and celebration of light: *Quaestio de luce* , *Quid sit lumen* , *Orphica Comparatio Solis ad Deum* , *Liber De Sole* , *Liber De Lumine* .
11. Cf. Baldassarre Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano* , in Carlo Cordié, ed., *Opere di Baldassarre Castiglione, Giovanni della Casa, Benvenuto Cellini* , Milano and Napoli, Ricciardi, 1960, p. 348.
12. (With its light triumphs over the darkness of the body.) Baldassarre Castiglione, *op. cit.* , p. 346.
13. Harold Bloom is among the many critics who highlighted this connection. See Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare. The Invention of the Human* , London, Fourth Estate, 1999, p. 135.
14. I chose to reproduce the character’s name in the spelling variant that we find in the text’s first redaction (which is also the variant chosen by William Carrol for the Cambridge edition), instead of the “Biron” variant that we find in other editions, including the *Oxford Complete Works* .
15. A similar “treatment” is reserved to Orlando by Rosaline’s almost namesake, Rosalind. The poetry through which Orlando praises Rosalind in *As You Like It* consists, as in the case of Berowne’s poetry, of the hyperbolic Petrarchan praise, characterized once again in chromatic terms: “All the pictures fairest lined / Are but black to Rosalind” (III.ii.90-91). This praise arouses Touchstone’s irony, who defines the verses as “false”, in both metrical and semantic terms. Annoyed by this idealizing and conventional poetry, Rosalind decides to “cure” her lover in a way similar to the one used by Rosaline, that is, by interpreting the “cruel” lady of the sonnet tradition: “would I [...] grieve, be effeminate, changeable, longing and liking, proud, fantastical, apish, shallow, inconstant, full of tears, full of smiles; for every passion something, and for no passion truly anything [...] would now like him, now

loathe him; then entertain him, then forswear him; now weep for him, then spit at him [...] And thus I cure him” (William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, in *The Oxford Shakespeare . The Complete Works*, op. cit., III.ii.394-405).

16. “Henceforth my wooing mind shall be expressed / In russet yeas and honest kersey noes” (V.ii.412-413).

17. Confront Berowne’s words – “That I may swear beauty doth beauty lack / If that she learn not of her eye to look / No face is fair that is not full so black” (IV.iii.249-251) – with sonnet 132, l. 13-14: “Then will I swear beauty herself is black, / And all they foul that thy complexion lack” William Shakespeare, *Sonnets and “A Lover’s Complaint”*, in *The Oxford Shakespeare . The Complete Works*, op. cit.

18. Although the term “light” acquires here a sensual double meaning, yet the word has surely been chosen by Shakespeare by virtue of its chromatic value.

19. K: “[...] a light heart lives long.” R: “What’s your dark meaning, mouse, of this light word?” K: “A light condition in a beauty dark.” R: “We need more light to find your meaning out.” K: “You’ll mar the light by taking it in snuff, / Therefore I’ll darkly end the argument.” R: “Look what you do, you do it still i’th’ dark.” K: “So do not you, for you are a light wench.” R: “Indeed I weight you not, and therefore light.” (V.ii.18-26).

20. See the section entitled “The Darkness” in Camilla Caporicci, *The Dark Lady. La rivoluzione shakespeariana nei sonetti alla Dama Bruna*, Passigano s.T., Aguaplano, 2013.

21. Alchemical treatises often refer to a luminous *nigredo* from which light and the colour white originate. According to the alchemical doctrine, the *Nigredo* (Blackness) represents the first step for the transformation of reality, the state of chaos before creation. From this darkness springs first the colour white, then red, and the entire rainbow. For this reason, among the emblems of mystical alchemy is often found the chromatic oxymoron of a darkness generating light, as in the case of the *Splendor Solis*, where a black man is refigured as meeting a white angel (Salomon Trismosin, *Splendor Solis*, trans. by Joscelyn Godwin, ed. Adam McLean, Grand Rapids, Phanes Press, 1991). Similarly, the black crow is considered the origin of any divine art, while the vulture, which is the archetype of the alchemical crow, cries in the *Golden Treatise*: “I am the White of the Black, and the Red of the White, and the Citrine of the Red; and I speak the very truth” (Mary Anne Atwood, ed., *The Golden Treatise of Hermes Trismegistus, concerning the Physical Secret of the Philosopher’s Stone*, trans. by Mary Anne Atwood and Francis Barret, Edmonds, The Alchemical Press, 1998, p. 10). In the version derived from the *Emerald Tablet*, he reveals his deepest truth, the generation of light and the colour white from blackness: “Albus nigri iam ipsum album, ex nigredo extrahimus” (Ioanne Augustino Pantheo, *Ars et Theoria Transmutationis Metallicae*, Roma, L’Arcano, 2007). On the other hand, many Renaissance mystics speak of a divine “dazzling darkness”, a “Ray of that Divine Darkness” in which God himself can be glimpsed (Dionysius

the Areopagite, *Mystical Theology*, trans. by Clarence Edwin Rolt, Montana, Kessinger Publishing Company, 1920, p. 192).

22. E. Herbert, Lord of Cherbury, "To her Hairs", in George C. Moore Smith, ed., *The Poems English and Latin of Edward Lord Herbert of Cherbury*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1923, l. 34.

23. E. Herbert, Lord of Cherbury, "Sonnet of Black Beauty", *op. cit.*, l. 12-13.

24. In his poetry we find a deep reflection on the nature of the colour black, which becomes the symbol of divine power's infinite mystery: "Thou Black, wherein all colours are compos'd, / And unto which they all at last return, / Thou colour of the Sun where it doth burn, / And shadow, where it cools, in thee is clos'd / Whatever nature can, or hath dispos'd / In any other Hue: from thee do rise / Those tempers and complexions, which disclod's, / As parts of thee, do work as mysteries, / Of that hidden power; when thou dost reign / The character of fate shine in the Skies, / And tell us what the Heaven do ordain, / But when Earth's common light shines to our eys, / Thou so retir'st thy self, that thy disdain / All revelation unto Man denys". E. Herbert, Lord of Cherbury, "Another Sonnet to Black it self", *op. cit.*

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## ABSTRACTS

The aim of this paper is to show the aesthetic as well as philosophical complexity of the discourse led by Shakespeare in *Love's Labour's Lost*; a comedy that conveys, through a particularly sophisticated and sometimes paradoxical language, deeply "revolutionary" meanings. The process that takes place in the play consists in a double passage, the main symbol of which is the darkness of Lady Rosaline. On the one hand, Shakespeare makes Rosaline's darkness the rock on which the traditional Petrarchan lyric founders. The falsifying character of the Petrarchan rhetorical language is in fact revealed to be misleading, while the Neo-platonic ideal at the base of the sonnet tradition, chromatically characterized as luminous and white, crashes against the obscure materiality of the lady's body. On the other hand, the exceptionally complex linguistic game through which Shakespeare ambiguously intertwines light and darkness, expresses the play's ontological and epistemological discovery. The initial denial of mankind's "material parts", associated by Navarre to an "ascetic" kind of knowledge, is followed by the recognition of matter's profound value and of a new epistemological paradigm, according to which knowledge can be reached only by directly experiencing the darkness of the material world.



Cet article analyse la complexité esthétique aussi bien que philosophique du discours de Shakespeare dans *Peines d'amour perdues*, comédie qui véhicule un sens profondément « révolutionnaire » au moyen d'une langue particulièrement sophistiquée et parfois paradoxale. Le double passage qui caractérise la pièce s'incarne dans la brune Rosaline. D'un côté, Shakespeare fait d'elle le rocher sur lequel vient s'échouer la poésie pétrarquiste traditionnelle. La rhétorique de Pétrarque se révèle trompeuse tandis que l'idéal néo-platonicien qui fonde la tradition du sonnet, à la gamme chromatique lumineuse et blanche, se heurte à la matérialité sombre du corps féminin. De l'autre, le jeu linguistique extraordinairement complexe par lequel Shakespeare mêle lumière et obscurité relaie la découverte ontologique et épistémologique de la pièce. L'ascétisme des hommes de Navarre laisse la place à la reconnaissance de l'importance de la matière dans une forme de savoir qui ne peut s'acquérir que par l'expérience directe de l'obscurité du monde matériel.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** colour, darkness, epistemology, light, Love's Labour's Lost, Petrarchism **Mots-clés:** couleur, épistémologie, obscurité, Peines d'amour perdues, pétrarquisme

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# “Jewels in crystal for some prince to buy”: Praising Eyes in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*

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In her now dated analysis of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, published in 1936, Dame Frances Yates insisted upon the play’s many references to light, eyes and vision: the early comedy, according to the English historian, is “full of eyes”.<sup>1</sup> In a much more recent study, Neil Vallely compellingly maintains that “light is the means through which the characters see and conceptualise the world”.<sup>2</sup> Although offering a different approach, both authors show how metaphors related to eyes and eyebeams - whether intromissive or extramissive - open onto a reflexion upon man’s optical relation to world, or visual mode of cognition. The optical elements in the play have thus already been thoroughly discussed over the past decades.<sup>3</sup> This is why I will be probing into the inclusion of sight into a slightly different metaphorical network.

In addition to physical and at times metaphysical echoes, which do undeniably shed light on many an obscure passage in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, my contention is that the ubiquitous visual metaphor is grounded upon an economy of vision that may also be read - or seen - as a vision of economy, as a site/sight of commercially-defined

transactions and negotiations. There is indeed a potentially remunerative or costly dimension to seeing in the play, with sight being staged as either a profit or loss experience stemming from the mostly uneven visual relations struck between the players on stage. In order to better grasp the dramatic foundations of this visual economy, I will be exploring ways of seeing in relation to praising, a notion that is frequently and strikingly attached to vision in the play. The Oxford English Dictionary first defines praising as “commending or lauding”. But praising carries more than just this meaning: to praise, among many other senses, is also to “fix the price of something for sale”.<sup>4</sup> As a result, praising may sometimes be heard as a synonym for prizing or reckoning, another recurring idea in the comedy. Praising eyes, an essential feature of Petrarchan poetry, therefore takes on a supplementary pecuniary meaning.

I shall first deal with fairness in the play, which, although supposedly measured by the judgment of the eyes, is never given a fair value and is instead counted as open to varying appreciations and liable to conflicting estimations. I will then inquire into the intrinsic link that is drawn between eyes and fluctuating prices, before turning to the reasons behind such a paradoxical economy of vision, with visual exchanges never amounting to such a sum as shall balance gains and losses or fully reconcile creditors and debtors.

## Fair ladies at fairs: the chapman’s praise

The word “praise” is used eighteen times in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*: in no other play does it appear as frequently, which may give a first indication of how important setting prices is in the overall unfolding of events. The Princess is the first to voice an unequivocal suggestion of a bond between eyes and prices:

PRINCESS. Good Lord Boyet, my beauty, though but mean,  
Needs not the painted flourish of your praise.  
Beauty is bought by the judgment of the eye,  
Not uttered by base sale of chapmen's tongues:  
I am less proud to hear you tell my worth  
Than you much willing to be counted wise  
In spending your wit in the praise of mine.  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, II.i.13-19 <sup>5</sup>

The footnote to this passage in William C. Carroll's edition explains that "in fending off Boyet's flattery, the Princess develops an extended metaphor of crass commercialism in his distribution of praise, through 'tell' (17), 'counted' (18), 'spending' (19)". <sup>6</sup> In the light of such association, the audience is led to equate "praising" and overpricing or mispricing. Although the Princess states that beauty is indeed to be "bought", she rebukes Boyet sharply for *paying* homage to her fairness with a "chapm[a]n's tongue" rather than with the "judgment of [his] eye", thereby spending his wit in profligate fashion. The French lord's prodigal praise only devalues the Princess's beauty's real price, following what Lorna Hutson calls an "inflationary and cheapening" effect. <sup>7</sup> As the Princess makes it clear, the chapman's praising strategy works in paradoxical ways: the greater the praise, the cheaper the praised. This contradictory logic is the same as the one voiced in *Troilus and Cressida* by Paris, who, countering Diomedes's scathing portrait of Helen, answers thus:

PARIS. Fair Diomed, you do as chapmen do,  
Dispraise the thing that you desire to buy.  
But we in silence hold this virtue well:  
We'll not commend what we intend to sell.  
*Troilus and Cressida*, IV.i.77-80 <sup>8</sup>

Paris refuses to practise the seller's art and commend Helen in order to raise Helen's price and value in the eyes of Diomedes, who,

conversely, fully masters and exploits the buyer's tricks. This passage from *Troilus and Cressida* echoes an earlier moment in the play when Troilus and Hector discuss the very meaning and measurement of value:

TROILUS. What's aught but as 'tis valued?  
HECTOR. But value dwells not in particular will.  
It holds his estimate and dignity  
As well wherein 'tis precious of itself  
As in the prizer. 'Tis mad idolatry  
To make the service greater than the god;  
And this will dotes that is inclinable  
To what infectiously itself affects  
Without some image of th'affected merit.  
*Troilus and Cressida*, II.ii.52-59

According to Hector, the exact value of persons or things stands halfway between the prized object's intrinsic worth and the prizer's own judgment on how precious it is to him. In addition to the religious undertones made evident in these lines, the commercial relation implied by the praising process resonates throughout. In other words, to value something is to strike a contract of sorts, a balanced agreement between the prizer and the prized. Outside such a well-adjusted estimation, affection runs the risk of turning into infection.

The blurring of the distinction between affection and infection is also a crucial idea in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and is persistently related to the eye motif, as exemplified by the following conversation between Berowne and the Princess:

BEROWNE. They are infected; in their heart it lies.  
They have the plague, and caught it of your eyes.  
These lords are visited; you are not free,  
For the Lord's token on you do I see.  
PRINCESS. No, they are not free that gave these tokens to us.  
BEROWNE. Our states are forfeit, seek not to undo us.  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, V.ii.420-426

Berowne's use of the word "free" can be glossed as "free of infection", <sup>9</sup> so that Berowne here implies that the Princess and her ladies may be as infected as the men are. But the Princess's answer opens up the meaning of "free", as she claims the tokens the women have received are both a symptom of infection and a sign of their suitor's generosity, thereby leading Berowne into begging her not to ruin the men ("seek not to undo us"). These tokens, seeing as they testify to the infection caught from the ladies' eyes as much as to the men's liberality, are described as a form of material praise, as a way for the men to try and "buy" the women's company, to borrow a phrase from the final scene of the play:

FERDINAND. More measure of this measure! Be not nice.

ROSALINE. We can afford no more at such a price.

FERDINAND. Prize you yourselves. What buys your company?

ROSALINE. Your absence only.

*Love's Labour's Lost*, v.ii.222-225

The tokens sent by the men act as either the visible symptoms of a visual infection <sup>10</sup> or as the price offered by the courtiers to earn the favour of the prized objects of their affection. This may account for the Princess' reaction upon receiving the men's presents:

PRINCESS. Sweet hearts, we shall be rich ere we depart,

If fairings come thus plentifully in.

A lady walled about with diamonds!

*Love's Labour's Lost*, v.ii.1-3

The word "fairing" originally refers to gifts bought at fairs. <sup>11</sup> Navarre and his men are consequently portrayed as purchasing praising material from chapmen with a view to translate their affection into something numbered and measurable through accumulation. Fairs, fairness and fairings conflate the judgment of the eye and the chapman's trade, as in Berowne's praise of Rosaline:

BEROWNE. Of all complexions the culled sovereignty,  
Do meet as at a fair in her fair cheek.  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, IV.iii.225-226

Countable praise thus becomes the most prominent vehicle of declarations of affection/infection, whereby the men's strategy meets that of the chapman. The French ladies frequently acknowledge and mock this confusion, overthrowing the (chap)men's sport and amusedly commenting upon the telling slippage between different kinds of "fair":

ROSALINE. Nay, I have verses too, I thank Berowne;  
The numbers true, and were the numbering too,  
I were the fairest goddess on the ground.  
I am compared to twenty thousand fairs.  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, v.ii.34-37

The metrical "numbers" of the praising poem bring about another form of valuation of Rosaline's numbered fairness, weighed against "twenty thousand fairs", the sheer figure and suggested exaggeration of such praise bearing witness to inflation and mispricing. Although the numbers of his poem are "true", Berowne's price/praise does not correspond to Rosaline's own estimation, as inferred from her use of the conditional ("were"). As a consequence, the ladies' fairness is not appreciated through the fair judgment of the men's eyes but is instead valued by chapmen numbering and negotiating their prices at fairs, regardless of the women's actual "mean" beauty (II.i.13).

Similarly, the "lady walled about with diamonds" which the Princess receives from the King parallels Boyet's "painted flourish" (II.i.14). The flowers of rhetoric – chapmen's unnecessary cosmetic inflation – anticipate the richly adorned painted portrait set in its diamond-studded frame and the verbose poem supplementing it: "Ware pencils, ho!" 12

The unbalance hence created between fairness and its numbers turns beauty into a highly relative and cheapened currency, whose value is set by arbitrary speculation rather than by fair estimation:

BASSANIO. [...] Look on beauty  
And you shall see 'tis purchased by the weight,  
Which therein works a miracle in nature,  
Making them lightest that wear most of it.  
*The Merchant of Venice*, III.ii.88-91

In Bassanio's words, "look[ing] on beauty" is enough to "see" the paradox in purchasing beauty "by the weight". The eyes of the men of Navarre are so infected that they fail to see these contradictions and misprice their own trade. This is perhaps best epitomised by the dramatically ironic moment when Berowne, of all men, dismisses the "seller's praise" and tongue, while he in fact never praises his lady in a "gentler" way than fellow chapmen:

BEROWNE. [...] Lend me the flourish of all gentle tongues –  
Fie, painted rhetoric! O, she needs it not.  
To things of sale a seller's praise belongs,  
She passes praise; then praise too short doth blot.  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, IV.iii.229-232

The courtiers' constant misprisions <sup>13</sup> may explain why the only man the Princess agrees to pay back on stage and without condition is the forester. The latter, contrary to the King and his men, uses his tongue in a way deemed fair enough by the Princess. In the scene confronting the two personae, the French sovereign's tacit self-appraisal of her intrinsic value meets the "prizer's" offer, paving the way for the only mutually consented transaction in the play: <sup>14</sup>

PRINCESS. Then, forester, my friend, where is the bush  
That we must stand and play the murderer in?  
FORESTER. Hereby, upon the edge of yonder coppice;  
A stand where you may make the fairest shoot.  
PRINCESS. I thank my beauty, I am fair that shoot,  
And thereupon thou speak'st the fairest shoot.



FORESTER. Pardon me, madam, for I meant not so.  
PRINCESS. What, what? First praise me and again say no?  
O short-lived pride! Not fair? Alack for woe!  
FORESTER. Yes, madam, fair.  
PRINCESS. Nay, never paint me now:  
Where fair is not, praise cannot mend the brow.  
Here, good my glass, take this for telling true; [*giving him money*]  
Fair payment for foul words is more than due.  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, IV.i.7-19

The forester is rewarded for holding up a “true” mirror to the Princess (“take this for telling *true*”, “good my *glass*”, my emphasis) rather than presenting her with a painted picture of her “credit” (IV.i.26). “Praise, an outward part” (IV.i.32) is never intrinsically attached to the prized object and is therefore left to the appreciation of an outside “prizer”, whose reckoning may or may not add up to a fair judgment in true colours. 15

## “The shop of your eyes”

Why do the male prizers prove unable to speak in the ladies’ “condign praise” (I.ii.22)? If the audience is to believe the Princess, “Beauty is bought by the judgment of the eye, / Not utter’d by base sale of chapmen’s tongues” (II.i.15-16). This statement implies that the “heart’s still rhetoric disclosed with eyes” (II.i.225) is a fitter index of prices than the eloquent seller’s praise. The *topos* of the eyes’ silent rhetoric was a staple feature of early modern poetry, 16 as shown in the final quatrain and couplet of Shakespeare’s sonnet 23:

O, let my books be then the eloquence  
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast,  
Who plead for love and look for recompense  
More than that tongue that more hath more express’d.  
O, learn to read what silent love hath writ:

To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.  
Sonnet 23, l. 9-14

The rhyme between “eloquence” and “recompense” poetically embodies the idea that only dumb praise can bring the lover his expected reward: the silent judgment of the eyes is deemed a truly remunerative move, as opposed to vocal praise. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, the dramatic conflict laid out by the Princess between visual purchasing and voluble commendation is also conveyed through the polysemic use of the word “utter” (“Not utter'd by base sale of chapmen's tongues”, II.i.16). Although the now current and most common meaning of utter is to give expression to something or to give out in an audible voice, the obsolete sense of “putt[ing] (goods, wares, etc.) forth or upon the market; issu[ing], offer[ing] or expos[ing] for sale or barter” was “in very frequent use from c1540 to c1655”.<sup>17</sup> A chapman uttering beauty's praise – or price – in a “base sale” may thus have been heard by an early modern audience, familiar with the economic connotations of the term, as a mere commercial transaction.<sup>18</sup> In so doing, the sellers deal in a currency that can never allocate a fair value to the prized lady. To utter could also mean “to give currency to (money, coin, notes, etc.); to put into circulation; esp. to pass or circulate (base coin, forged notes, etc.) as legal tender.”<sup>19</sup> Could it be one of the reasons why the circulation of eloquent praise through “significant[s]” (III.i.114) and “counsel[s]” (III.i.147) is first associated with remuneration and later on hindered by the bearer's failure to “reckon” anything or anyone?<sup>20</sup> The repetitions and echoes to be heard at the end of the opening scene of the third act emphasise the near-mechanical nature of this transaction. This first appears through the similar sentences used by Armado and Berowne when asking Costard to bear their letters to Jaquenetta and Rosaline. Armado's words (“Bear this

significant [*Gives a letter*] to the country maid Jaquenetta. There is remuneration [*Gives a coin*]”, III.i.113-115) cannot but echo through Berowne’s own, pronounced only moments afterwards:

BEROWNE. [...] Ask for her,  
And to her white hand see thou do commend  
This sealed-up counsel. [*Gives a letter*] There’s thy guerdon [*Gives a coin*]: go.  
*Love’s Labour’s Lost*, III.i.145-147

Costard also reacts similarly to the repeated sequence (handing out a letter first and then offering a coin to the messenger): in both cases, Costard is ignorant of the word used to designate the coin he receives. “Remuneration” and “guerdon” become “verbal coins” <sup>21</sup> whose true value Costard is unable to determine, <sup>22</sup> thus anticipating his “ill[ness] at reckoning” (I.ii.34), i.e. at judging or considering the identity of the person he brings the letters to. <sup>23</sup>

In *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, beauty uttered is beauty exposed both for sale and to potential devaluation or loss (as in the case of the “lost” or misplaced letters). This also transpires through Berowne’s description of astronomers versed in naming stars yet missing out on sheer contemplation. Eyes were most commonly compared to stars in early modern and especially Petrarchan poetry, so that the following passage may be heard as another illustration of the conflicting values of silent observation and wordy praise:

Small have continual plodders ever won,  
Save base authority from others’ books.  
These earthly godfathers of heaven’s lights,  
That give a name to every fixed star,  
Have no more profit of their shining nights  
Than those that walk and wot not what they are.  
Too much to know is to know nought but fame,  
And every godfather can give a name.  
*Love’s Labour’s Lost*, I.i.86-93

Tellingly enough, Berowne calls the authority of books “base”. The same adjective is later used by the Princess to defame the chapmen’s “profits”, those recorded in their own (account) books, used for reckoning in numbers the value of their wares. Yet although there is no profit to be made from naming (“These earthly godfathers [...] / Have no more *profit* of their shining nights”, my emphasis), quiet contemplation of eyes/stars seems impossible in the play, considering how astronomical lore is conveyed in a ridiculously vast array of words and how pedants and curates alike relish the accumulation of synonyms for the moon: Dycinna, Phoebe, Luna (IV.ii.35).

But women’s eyes are not the only ones to be praised in this two-way logic bringing prizer and prized face to face. Men’s praising eyes, those purchasers of beauty, are sometimes “o’erthrown” by the Princess and her followers, as though there were no such visual trade in the play as sight by sight o’erthrown. The men’s own judgment of their visual capacities first testifies to their self-esteem, as is expounded by Berowne:

But love, first learned in a lady’s eyes,  
Lives not alone immured in the brain,  
But with the motion of all elements  
Courses as swift as thought in every power,  
And gives to every power a double power  
Above their functions and their offices.  
It adds a precious seeing to the eye [...].  
*Love’s Labour’s Lost*, IV.iii.296-302

The men think their affection doubles the power and function of their beauty-buying eyes, thereby making them “precious” and endowing them with greater value. Yet this added value paradoxically leads to the very commodification of men’s precious eyes, removing them from (purchasing) power and turning sellers

into buyers. Moth, when advising Armado to pose as a melancholy lover, first suggests this:

MOTH. No, my complete master: but to jig off a tune at the tongue's end, canary to it with your feet, humour it with turning up your eyelids, sigh a note and sing a note, sometime through the throat, as if you swallowed love with singing love, sometime through the nose, as if you snuffed up love by smelling love; with your hat penthouse-like o'er the shop of your eyes [...].  
(*Love's Labour's Lost*, III.i.8-13)

The witty page imagines Armado posing with his hat low on his eyes, like an awning on a shop, hiding it partially, in anticipation, perhaps, of the speechless vizards of the Muscovites. Throughout the comedy, the eyes of men in love are hidden behind sloping roofs or masks, screening the precious crystal inside, the better to advertise it: Moth here offers commercial advice to Armado in order to catch Jaquenetta's eye and lead her towards the shop of his own. The penthouse metaphor as such may be a reference to the then common practice of placing lattices in front of foreigners' shop windows in early modern London:

Strangers and foreigners were already subject to many restrictions. By the terms of City custom the right to engage in retail trade was reserved to freemen, and any transaction between non-freemen was termed 'foreign bought and sold', the penalty for which was forfeiture of the goods. Non-freemen were entitled to pursue their trades provided that they placed lattices before their windows so that their wares could not be seen from the street. <sup>24</sup>

The Spaniard and the Muscovites could not have exposed their wares as freely as citizens, or as the King of Navarre in his own kingdom, upon discovering the Princess:

BOYET. Why, all his behaviours did make their retire  
To the court of his eye, peeping thorough desire.  
His heart, like an agate with your print impressed,  
Proud with his form, in his eye pride expressed.  
His tongue, all impatient to speak and not see,

Did stumble with haste in his eyesight to be.  
All senses to that sense did make their repair,  
To feel only looking on fairest of fair.  
Methought all his senses were locked in his eye,  
As jewels in crystal for some prince to buy,  
Who, tendering their own worth from where they were glassed,  
Did point you to buy them, along as you passed.  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, II.i.230-241

By “adding a tongue” to dumb eloquence (II.i.249) and “mak[ing] a mouth” of men’s eyes (II.i.248), Boyet depicts the King as prized rather than as prizer, in a silent display of affection turned into a base commercial offer by Boyet the “lovemonger” (II.i.250). Contrary to Armado’s shop-window, hidden behind lattices, the King’s precious eyes are displayed in full view – a possible echo of the “aristocratic consumerism” characteristic of some shopping streets in London, such as Goldsmith’s Row in Cheapside.<sup>25</sup> Another likely reference behind this comparison are the jewels that had been offered to Elizabeth I for the New Year in 1574, whose description reads: “*Item*, a jewel, being a crystal garnished with gold; Adam and Eve enamelled white, and a crystal pendant, garnished with gold, and four small pearls pendant”.<sup>26</sup> Whatever the reference, critics have often looked for external or topical evidence to fully understand the scope of this passage, thus suggesting that the metaphor of the King’s worth being locked up behind the crystalline lens of his eyes offers more than a traditional Petrarchan or optical play on words.

## Sights/sites of exchange

Visual perception therefore becomes a site of exchange and transactions in *Love's Labour's Lost*. If beauty is bought by the judgment of the eye, and if eyes themselves “tender their own

worth” (II.i.240) by displaying their splendour as in a shop – be it that of a foreigner or a freeman – seeing with affected eyes is then not essentially different from the chapman’s trade. Revealingly enough, the men of Navarre and the women of France enter into negotiations from the very first moment they set eyes on each other. The sight of the receipts that would settle the Aquitaine debt for which the Princess travels to Navarre in the first the place is indeed deferred and never actually shown onstage:

KING. [...] if you prove it, I’ll repay it back  
Or yield up Aquitaine.

PRINCESS. We arrest your word.

Boyet, you can produce acquittances  
For such a sum from special officers,  
Of Charles his father.

KING. Satisfy me so.

BOYET. So please your grace, the packet is not come  
Where that and other specialties are bound.  
Tomorrow you shall have a sight of them.

*Love’s Labour’s Lost*, II.i.156-163

The production of acquittances would “arrest the king’s words” in at least two ways: although this phrase is to be understood as “I take your words as security”,<sup>27</sup> ocular evidence would also literally “stop” the king’s words. Looking at the exact sum due to the Princess at such an early stage would quite simply put an end to all suits in the play – both amorous and legal – by cutting short the French embassy. The sight of specialties would therefore render the chapman’s tongue useless and speculation unworkable.

Here, on the contrary, with no reference to any fair value, the ladies are free to discuss the terms of all prospective contracts in the play. The “contractual basis”<sup>28</sup> of most exchanges in the play is then destabilised to the core, forever deferring the closing of a deal.<sup>29</sup>

One of the many witty exchanges between Rosaline and Berowne offers an apt illustration of such dynamics:

BEROWNE. When we greet,  
With eyes' best seeing, heaven's fiery eye,  
By light we lose light. Your capacity  
Is that of nature that to your huge store  
Wise things seem foolish and rich things but poor.  
ROSALINE. This proves you wise and rich, for in my eye –  
BEROWNE. I am a fool, and full of poverty.  
ROSALINE: But that you take what doth to you belong,  
It were a fault to snatch words from my tongue.  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, v.ii.374-382

Berowne first unfolds a common *cliché* of both optics and poetry: when one looks at the sun, although the sun is the main provider of light, it blinds us and prevents one from seeing for a while. Hence light paradoxically deprives us of light. Berowne also draws a comparison between this common optical knowledge and Rosaline's capacity to change wealth into poverty, to cheapen the value of things – which takes us back to the relativity of praise, never quite adding up to the prize expected by the seller. Rosaline, following up on Berowne's analogy, is about to formulate a visual judgement (“for in my eye”) when she is abruptly interrupted by Berowne. He “arrests” her words and concludes the deal by tendering his own mean worth. The homophonic equation he suggests between two kinds of “full” makes it clear and audible that Rosaline may never be satisfied, her desire never fulfilled but only filled by a poor fool. Far from being contented with such an agreement or settlement, Rosaline snaps at Berowne for having “snatched” words from her, for having stolen or conveyed <sup>30</sup> the final price she wanted to assign herself. As a result, Rosaline's visual estimation (“for in my eye”) remains unspoken and the mutual agreement of the two parties deferred indefinitely.



All eyes and visual judgments in the play, supposedly apt at reckoning beauty better than the chapman's tongue, are in fact brought into a "world-without-end bargain" (v.ii.763). Seeing is not a unilateral process in the play, as it is both intromissive and extramissive – to use optical terms – or, to use economic words, as it works both and alternately as a credit and as a debt. The balancing moment when eyes meet like prizer and prized on a par with fixed parts to play can only come after further silent dealings and productions of acquittances – negotiations too long for a play.

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## NOTES

1. Frances Yates, *A Study of Love's Labour's Lost*, Cambridge, CUP, (1936), 2013, p. 149.
2. Neil Vallely, "Light, the Eye and Visual Epistemologies in *Love's Labour's Lost*" in Delphine Lemonnier-Textier and Guillaume Winter, eds., *Lectures de Love's Labour's Lost*, Rennes, PUR, 2014, 177-192, p. 177.
3. I have here given only two examples in a much longer list of articles dealing with the subject. See for example my forthcoming article entitled "Shakespeare's Alhazen: *Love's Labour's Lost* and the History of Optics". The play was very early considered as illustrating a number of optical theories. In the "early history of the play" section of his introduction, William C. Carroll, while tracing the "robust literary circulation" of *Love's Labour's Lost*, mentions for instance the echoes of Shakespeare's comedy found in "a treatise on optics" (*Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. William C. Carroll, Cambridge, CUP, The New Cambridge Shakespeare, 2009, p. 38).
4. *OED*, praise v. I and II.4 and 5.
5. All quotations are taken from the reference edition chosen for the *agrégation* (2015-2016): *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed., William C. Carroll, *op. cit.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
7. "The language of female beauty parod[ies] the inflationary and cheapening effects of courtly hyperbole", Lorna Huston, *The Invention of Suspicion. Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama*, Oxford, OUP, 2011, p. 301.

8. References to plays other than *Love's Labour's Lost* are to William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, eds. John Jowett, William Montgomery, Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Oxford, OUP, 2005.

9. See William C. Carroll, *op. cit.*, n. 422, p. 157.

10. The word "tokens" may also have referred to spots showing on the men's bodies, indicating disease, especially the plague, a sense recorded by the *OED* (token n., 2b), although all examples of such usage listed under this entry date from 1634 and after.

11. *OED*, fairing n., 1.

12. V .ii.43. For the description of the King's long-winded praise in rhyme, see v .ii.6-10.

13. The word "misprision" appears once in the play. It is used by Berowne when commenting upon Dumaine's affection: "A fever in your blood? Why then, incision / Would let her out in saucers. Sweet misprision!" ( IV .iii.89-90). The line is quoted among *OED* examples of sense 2.b (under misprision, n. <sup>1</sup>): "the mistaking of one thing for another; a misunderstanding; a mistake". And, interestingly enough, the word is etymologically related to mispricing. Therefore, not only does Berowne again use a word that could ironically apply to himself, but he also chooses a term that further buttresses the link between the two pairs affection/infection and praising/mispricing.

14. This also holds true of Costard and Jaquenetta, seeing as the former ends up accusing Armado of being responsible for the latter's pregnancy. Whether the audience is to believe that Armado is indeed the father or that Jaquenetta is expecting Costard's child is never elucidated, therefore obscuring the nature of Armado's new vow and the contract sealed between the Spanish braggart and the dairymaid.

15. Colours and "painting" in general are key themes in the play, as is illustrated by the early debate between Armado and Moth about the dangers of white and red ( I .ii.75-89). Revealingly enough, one of the now obsolete senses of "fair" ("clean" or "pure") also applies to colours (and was then a synonym for bright, pure, not dull or muddy). See *OED*, fair, *adj.* and n. <sup>1</sup>, III.11.a.

16. For further analysis of the "silent rhetoric" idea, see Laetitia Coussement-Boillot and Christine Sukič, eds., "*Silent Rhetoric, "Dumb Eloquence": The Rhetoric of Silence in Early Modern English Literature*", Paris, Université Paris Diderot, Cahiers Charles V, n. 43, 2007.

17. *OED*, utter, v. <sup>1</sup>, I. 1.

18. This also appears clearly in Berowne's description of Boyet:

This fellow pecks up it as pigeons peas,

And utters it gain when Goth doth please.

He is wit's pedlar, and retails his wares

At wakes and wassails, meetings, markets, fairs. ( v .ii.315-318, my emphasis)

19. *OED*, utter, v. <sup>1</sup>, 2. a.

20. About the importance of reckoning in the play see Cynthia Lewis, “‘We Know What We Know’: Reckoning in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*”, *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 105, No.2 (Spring, 2008), p. 245-264. In this article, Lewis explains how reckoning “rang[es] from simple counting to more complex formulations of value – that, taken together, shape the play both subtly and profoundly and thus reward close inspection”, p. 246.

21. William C. Carroll, *op. cit.*, n. 119, p. 98.

22. Costard attributes value to coins according to their names, rather than their true weight, as is made clear in his remark on the fairness of the word “remuneration” compared to a French crown: “Why, it is a fairer name than French crown” ( III .i.122-123 and n. 123, p. 99). This passage is another instance of how the word “fair” is given many different meanings in the play.

23. I would here like to thank J. Turner for his insightful questions and suggestions about Costard’s unique status within this paradoxical economy.

24. Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Social Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London*, Cambridge, CUP, 1991, p. 134, quoted in John Michael Archer, “*Love’s Labour’s Lost*”, in Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard, eds., *A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works*, Vol. 3: *The Comedies*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2003, p. 320-337, p. 326.

25. John Michael Archer, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

26. John Nichols, *The Progress and Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, London, 1823, Vol. 1, p. 380.

27. William C. Carroll, *op. cit.*, n. 157, p. 88.

28. I am borrowing the phrase from Henry Woudhuysen’s introduction to the Arden edition of the play (*Love’s Labour’s Lost*, H. R. Woudhuysen, ed., London, Methuen Drama, Arden Shakespeare, 1998, p. 18).

29. This extends to generic issues, as the comic contract itself lacks a regular sealing in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, with the protraction of all marriages. See for example Lynda E. Boose, “The Comic Contract and Portia’s Golden Ring”, *Shakespeare Studies*, Vol. 20, 1988, p. 241-254 and in particular the passage about the “Jack and Jill” formula (p. 242): “For Shakespeare ... , the comic contract is always fulfilled through a formulaic closure of marriage that at times seems so blatantly imposed on top of a recalcitrant narrative as to approach becoming a device that parodies the demands of the patriarchal formula it so determinedly reproduces. ... This “Jack shall have Jill and all shall be well” closure unites the various plot oppositions and emblematically dramatizes a model of social harmony. But more importantly, it re-presents the ultimate wedding between the play and audience and thus fulfils the generic obligations of comic form ... . Yet within Shakespeare’s complex formulation, fulfilling that indenture provides precisely the context that allows for subverting it.”

30. “To convey” could also mean “to steal”, as recalled by Pistol in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: “‘Convey’, the wise it call. ‘Steal’? Foh, a fico for the phrase!”, I .iii.26-27.

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## ABSTRACTS

Although a number of more or less recent studies of *Love's Labour's Lost* have documented the optical dimension of vision and light-related metaphors in the play, little has been said about how visual perception also relates to a network of economic transactions. The present article explores the ways in which the economy of vision in *Love's Labour's Lost* gives rise to a paradoxical vision of economy.

Si la dimension optique des métaphores de la vision et de la lumière ont déjà fait l'objet de plusieurs études plus ou moins récentes consacrées à *Love's Labour's Lost*, le lien qui unit la perception visuelle aux nombreuses transactions économiques qui jalonnent la pièce a plus rarement été isolé et analysé. Le présent article retrace la façon dont l'économie de la vision dessine aussi une vision paradoxale de l'économie.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** beauty, trade, *Love's Labour's Lost*, negotiation, fairness, praise, numbers, vision

**Mots-clés:** commerce, beauté, calcul, négociation, Peines d'amour perdues, vision

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Staging Bruno's Scripted  
Emblems: Anti-Petrarchism and  
Mannerism in *Love's Labour's Lost*

*È cosa veramente, o generosissimo Cavaliere, da basso, bruto e sporco ingegno d'essersi fatto costantemente studioso, ad aver affisso un curioso pensiero circo sopra la bellezza d'un corpo fememile.*

It is truly, O most generous Sir, the work of a low, brutish and filthy nature constant to become the admirer, and have attached a devote thought to or around the beauty of a woman's body. <sup>1</sup>

Giordano Bruno's anti-Petrarchan address to Sir Philip Sidney in *De gli eroici furori* (1585) must serve as my incipit to the intriguing relationship between Bruno and Shakespeare in *Love's Labour's Lost*. In one important respect the play is a typical Shakespearean comedy in its focus on courtship and an abundant use of witty wordplay, according to John Arthos, one of "the happiest." <sup>2</sup> At the same time, however, Shakespeare works against the conventions of courtship by avoiding customary closure and the establishment of a comic society. It is also one of three plays for which we have no definite sources – the others being *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*.

More importantly, however, *Love's Labour's Lost* also strikes a note of high seriousness, by posing basic questions about truth and love, topics that indeed would seem to compromise any attempt at construing a finale of comic merriment. In spite of the play's surprising toned-down conclusion, where a possible round of marriages is postponed for a year, I would still argue against

emphasizing too much its “apartness”, and rather draw attention to the fact that the play, in the manner of *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*, owes a lot to the Elizabethan aristocratic sonnet culture. For the characters in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, too, “understand one another in terms of sonnet conceits and postures, Petrarchan and anti-Petrarchan.”<sup>3</sup> I therefore propose that in addition to a general engagement with the courtly game of sonnet writing associated especially with Sir Philip Sidney and his circle, the play draws more specifically on the particular brand of Petrarchism and poetic emblematics that Giordano Bruno propagated to London’s cultural elite in 1583-85.<sup>4</sup> The work that especially bears on Shakespeare’s critique of Petrarchan courtship conventions is first and foremost the avant-garde dialogue *De gli eroici furori*, published in London in 1585, from which Shakespeare lifts the procession and pilgrimage of the heroic lovers. The play also seems to owe something to Bruno’s only dramatic work, *Il Candelaio, Commedia* (1582),<sup>5</sup> and together these works provide a matrix for the courtship game unraveled in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.

The poetic ideal of *ut pictura poesis*, including ekphrasis, is a commonplace that underscores the focus on visuality in Elizabethan poetry and *Love’s Labour’s Lost* shows this influence to a high degree. The increased emphasis on printed visual media on the Continent that followed the publication of Andrea Alciati’s seminal *Emblematum liber* (1531) was no less than remarkable: the explosive rise in the printing and distribution of illustrated books, the circulation first in Europe, then in England, of prints of artworks, buildings, and city prospects in the second half of the sixteenth century contributed to changing age-old conventions of communication also in England, even if the first highly derivative emblem book was not printed until 1586.<sup>6</sup> A new genre that focused on the marriage of illustration and

text, it provided topoi, images, and patterns for poets and visual artists to imitate, precisely when artists in accordance with the new mannerist style to a lesser degree imitated nature itself but emulated and tried to outdo the work of other artists. Mannerism has been variously defined but it is essentially “a historical period existing from 1520 to 1620, in Europe, centered in Italy but with a number of foreign manifestations both contemporary and historical, during which a characteristic style emerged.”<sup>7</sup> In this context, Robin Raybould writes that the *Emblemata* “was destined to begin a literary revolution, a revolution that in hindsight, with the background and in the context of the times [...] seems to have been almost inevitable.”<sup>8</sup> Of course, that revolution was equally strong, if not stronger, in the visual arts. Although many of the emblem books that followed in the wake of Alciati have relatively crude illustrations, they were cherished pattern books, providing topoi or motifs for the arts, being aids to invention.<sup>9</sup> In addition, they enriched the meaning and aesthetic pleasure due to the synaesthetic complementarity of the resulting art works – of which the stage with its speaking and moving pictures constitutes the fullest expression, as is indeed evident in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.

Although critics have debated the origins of Mannerism as a style and cultural movement,<sup>10</sup> there is great consensus about what constitutes the formal traits of mannerist style in art and literature, although Jean-Pierre Maquerlot writes that is hard to define the style narrowly as “a combinatory order of recurrent schemes,”<sup>11</sup> because “the Mannerist style is even more protean than the Baroque.”<sup>12</sup> John Shearman terms it the *stylish style* with an emphasis on elegance, decoration and rejection of emotional excess, but also stresses the preference for indirection and deliberate difficulty. It inverts “the classical [...] relation of form and content,”



he writes, and “ cultivates style at the expense of its expressive function.” <sup>13</sup> The style of Torquato Tasso is typical: It was “ artificially interwoven more than is normal, and adorned with varied figures suitable for tempering that excessive clarity, such as caesuras, convolutions, hyperbole, irony, displacement.” <sup>14</sup> The emphasis on excessively ornamented surfaces and on the parts rather than the whole, entailed repeated changes of focus and less focus on clarity, naturalness, and pictorial depth. Also, there is a clear tendency to quote or allude to the work of earlier artists and poets. This was done with the aim to create complexity of form and polysemousness. <sup>15</sup> In short, Mannerism is an art of allusion and quotation, <sup>16</sup> depending on the special knowledge of its audiences and their ability to recollect and recognize complexities of form and content. In this respect, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* exhibits many features of the Italianate style.

The many refined conceits in Petrarch’s *Il Canzoniere* provided a treasured model for the emblematic, but the multiplication of Petrarchan conceits and stylistic features in the poetry of his Italian and English imitators, eventually triggered a reaction against stylistic excess. <sup>17</sup> As Frances Yates showed in her seminal article on “Giordano Bruno and the Emblematic Tradition,” <sup>18</sup> Bruno and Sidney were among the leading critics of contrived and superficial Petrarchism in the 1580s, and Shakespeare followed suit in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (and e.g. *Romeo and Juliet* ) by putting the abuses of Petrarchism hilariously on display. Shakespeare did not, however, neglect the more sombre and humane aspects of Bruno the philosopher, the *academico di nulla academia* , who used “ *In tristitia hilaris, in hilaritate tristis* ” [“In sadness merry, in merriment sad”] for his personal motto. <sup>19</sup>

In the play, Berowne is the accomplished verbal artist, who displays his mannerist leanings both in his *sprezzatura*, or careless brilliance, and in the contrived elocution of his speeches, as is clearly signaled already in one of his first speeches:

Come on then, *I will swear* to study so  
To *know* the thing I am forbid to *know*:  
As thus, to study where I well may dine,  
When to feast expressly am forbid;  
Or study where to meet some *mistress* fine,  
When *mistresses* from common else are hid;  
Or having sworn too hard-a-keeping oath,  
Study to break it and not break my troth.  
If study's gain be thus, and this be so,  
Study *knows* that which yet it doth not *know*.  
*Swear* me to this, and *I will* ne'er say no.  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, I.i.59-69; emphasis mine

In addition to displaying an example of *circulatio* when dwelling on the word “study” five times, Berowne repeats words that form circles within his speech (*I will / swear / know / know / mistress // mistresses / know / know / Swear / I will*).

When speaking about the effect of the “beauty” of the Princess and her ladies-in-waiting on their would-be lovers, Berowne describes the workings of “love,” or Cupid, in a manner that summarizes the effects of instability and movement that characterise mannerist compositions, forcing the eye to circulate and shift between unexpected and varied forms:

As love is *full* of unbecoming strains,  
All wanton as a child, skipping and vain,  
*Formed* by *the eye* and therefore, like *the eye*,  
*Full* of strange shapes, of habits and of *forms*,  
*Varying* in subjects as *the eye* doth roll  
To every *varied object* in his glance; ...  
V.ii.734-739; emphasis mine

Mannerist art works do precisely baffle and unsettle by drawing the spectator's eye and attention to "strange shapes" and "varying [...] subjects," frequently displaying the serpentine movements of figures ( *figure serpentine* ). The surprising turns and changes of identity, behaviour, and shifts in linguistic registers in mannerist drama similarly engage and confuse spectators by begetting "conceit beyond expectation."<sup>20</sup> Verbal coils thus mark Berowne's speech, when a series of word repetitions in sequence produces at the same time dynamic and arresting movements ( *full formed / the eye; the eye / full/ forms; varying / subjects / the eye / varied / object* ).

In 1936 Muriel Bradbrook in *The School of Night* and Frances A. Yates in *A Study of Love's Labour's Lost* related Shakespeare's comedy to Bruno and to ideas at work in Elizabethan intellectual circles in which Bruno moved, but their studies were not received with general approval.<sup>21</sup> Yates, who had been the most daring and detailed investigator of the play in relation to Bruno's policies of religious reform, did not write extensively on the play again, but returned to the issue briefly in her seminal work *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964), in which she states that "an entirely new approach to the problem of Bruno and Shakespeare has to be made."<sup>22</sup> She suggests that the answer to the problem may lie in "Shakespeare's profound preoccupation with significant language."

23

It is precisely language, poetic or literary, as well as the visual language of scenic representation that aims to deceive or mask the truth, confusing the relationship between *verba* and *res*, style and meaning, outward show and inner essence, that is under attack in the play, a typical characteristic of mannerist style.<sup>24</sup> The potential and allusiveness of language, together with Shakespeare's reconfiguring of comic form, constitute s the main focus of the

present article, even though I acknowledge the element of topicality so evident in Shakespeare's choice of names for his characters,<sup>25</sup> and in the symbolism of the hunting-scene in Act Four.<sup>26</sup> However important, the allusions to contemporary political events and pressing issues can but serve as the backdrop for the negotiations of love in the main plot and should, I propose, not be allowed to obfuscate the emphasis that Shakespeare puts on the theme of individual responsibility and sincerity in the play.

*Love's Labour's Lost* is probably the first Shakespeare play to engage consistently with the sonnet phenomenon that had developed in England during the 1580s and 1590s, a vogue that in its superficiality and artifice produced the characteristic mannerist dissociation of the verbal surface from the core, or form from content,<sup>27</sup> turning all into display and play at the expense of meaning and morality. The comedy is designed to appeal especially to the members of a cultural elite familiar with Italian and French literary culture, that had a taste for Neo-Platonist aesthetics and concepts like *discordia concors*, "a principle that Bruno's *De gli eroici furori* played a crucial role of naturalizing among Elizabethan writers."<sup>28</sup> Another of these philosophical concepts is that of the infolding of three qualities into one, famously portrayed in Botticelli's dancing graces in *La Primavera*, in Bruno's discussion of the choice of Paris in *De gli eroici furori* (I.xi.84-5), or in the intricate plot of *Il Candelaio*, written and produced for a sophisticated Parisian audience. Edgar Wind terms such "trinities" examples of a *trinitas productoria*,<sup>29</sup> a principle that prominently resurfaces at various points and levels in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and whose roots are found in Plato and his translator, Marsilio Ficino.<sup>30</sup>

The play has three interwoven plots set out in nine scenes, but I shall only consider the main plot which is a fairly simple one in terms of

action: it moves from an initial vow to study and remain chaste for three years, a pledge Navarre extracts from of his three courtiers, Dumaine, Longaville and Berowne, and it ends with a series of vows elicited from and accepted by the same by the Princess of France and her three ladies-in-waiting. In the action between these pledges we witness the process by which the men first fall in love and then mount a campaign to win the ladies, but are soundly defeated. The male courtship game fails miserably and instead a female discursive space is opened. In Catherine Bates' view, "by relentless deflation, Shakespeare pokes cruel fun at the claim of *amour courtois* to ennoble men through love." The witty and resourceful women win the verbal duels and dictate their own conditions, as it were, which Bates sees as an "injection of seriousness, which puts content back behind the form." This, she claims, may be said to go against "the more playful spirit of the play,"<sup>31</sup> but rather than introducing something new and serious into the plot, it makes, I suggest, evident the inherent limitations and potential dangers of pacts the imposed by patriarchy.

Shakespeare adds dramatic prominence to the ill-advised pledge of academic celibacy by drawing attention to the ultimate compact play, *Doctor Faustus*, at the very opening of the comedy, warning us that the pact is doomed to fail. When trying to wriggle out of his oath, Browne queries the King: "By yea and nay, sir, then I swore in jest. / What is the end of study, let me know?" (I.i.54-55). The obvious answer would be that the end of study is truth or wisdom, but as in the case of Faustus, Berowne seeks forbidden knowledge: "I will swear to study so / To know the thing I am forbid to know"(I.i.59-60). However his intent "to meet some mistress fine" belongs to quite another category of forbidden knowledge, one that

is more related to the games of deception that follow and where Shakespeare activates a line of action fetched from *De gli eroici furori*. While the witty reference to *Doctor Faustus* is well-known, critics have missed the fact that Marlowe's line is lifted from Bruno's attack on academic pedants, i.e. men like Navarre, Dumaine, and Longaville; for when Faustus wishes to "live and die in Aristotle's works" and is "'ravished by "sweet *Analytiks* " (I.i.5; 6), he is translating directly from Bruno's dialogue: "*Quegli che vogliono vivere e morire per Aristotile, e non sanno i titoli de' libri d'Aristotile* " ["those who desire to live and die for Aristotle, and do not even know the titles of his books]."<sup>32</sup> As I shall argue in the following, it is no coincidence that it is Berowne, whose name echoes that of the philosopher, who alludes to the fatal compact of Marlowe's magus.

The resolve of Navarre and his courtiers to honour their pledge crumbles as soon as a delegation headed by the Princess of France arrives unexpectedly on a diplomatic mission (II.i). The meeting between the King and his lords and the Princess and her ladies completely dissolves their resolve to study and to avoid female company. Instead the men all fall in love and secretly begin composing sonnets in praise of their chosen ladies, rehearsing well-worn and exaggerated Petrarchan conceits. At the same time it is clear that the Princess, Katherine, Maria, and Rosaline are all romantically interested in the King and his three courtiers (II.i.5-6; 77-79). The epistolary love poems the men produce are examples of "naked emblems", i.e. poems without visual illustrations, based on well-worn conceits used by continental emblematisers. It is fair to say Shakespeare develops his own type of "performed" or "moving emblems" in rivalry with the combination of picture and subscription in an emblem, entering indirectly as it were into a *paragone* between theatrical performance and printed emblem. The

series of poetic letters performed by Navarre, Dumaine, and Longaville, therefore could be said to function as an enacted emblem book, seen and overheard by their fellows who lie in hiding, as well as the spectators. In the manner that emblem follows emblem in consecutive pages in an emblem book, Navarre, Dumaine, and Longaville at equal intervals march onto the stage and recite their “inscriptions” based on well-known Petrarchan conceits (Navarre focusing on the lady’s eyebeams and the lover’s tears, Longaville on the fickleness of love pledges, while Dumaine dwells on the conventional image of the rose). Together the performances form, as it were, a sonnet “sequence” *per se*, or a paradramatic inset.

In this, Shakespeare’s characters display the emblematic mode seen in the poetry of Bruno and Sidney in the 1580s.<sup>33</sup> One by one, the King, Dumaine and Longaville recite and perform their creations unaware of the fact that they are watched and overheard by Berowne who in the end steps into the open to castigate his fellows, assuming the role of an anti-Petrarchan chider – “Tush, none but minstrels like of sonneting!”(IV.iii.150):

O, what a scene of foolery have I seen,  
Of sighs, of groans, of sorrow, and of teen!  
O me, with what strict patience have I sat,  
To see a king transformed to a gnat!  
To see great Hercules whipping a gig,  
And profound Solomon to tune a gig, ...  
IV.iii.155-160

Hypocritically he assumes the *sprezzatura* attitude of a mannerist courtier and hides his real self: being in the words of Cyrus Hoy about such a character in general, “cool, poised, utterly self-absorbed – though in fact, of course, never so self-absorbed that [he] does not have an eye ready to detect any betrayal of intention or

motive in others.”<sup>34</sup> Shortly before Costard exposes that Berowne, too, is a perjurer, the latter gloats over his companions’ perjury:

When shall you see me write a thing in rhyme?  
Or groan for Joan? Or spend a minute’s time  
In pruning me? When shall you hear that I  
Will praise a hand, a foot, a face, an eye,  
A gait, a state, a brow, a breast, a waist,  
A leg, a limb ...  
IV.iii.173-178

The attack brings us back to Bruno’s dedication to Sidney in *De gli eroici furori*, where he similarly denounces the writers on vulgar love who go mad about the bodily attractions of women and enumerate these in detail in the manner witnessed in Berowne’s speech:

Per quegli occhi, per quelle guance, per quel busto, per quell bianco, per quel vermiglio, per quella lingua, per quel dente, per quel labro, quel crine, quella veste.  
[For those eyes, for those cheeks, for that bosom, for that white, for that crimson, for that tongue, for that tooth, for that lip, for that hair, for that dress.]  
“Argomento”, p. 4-5

The parts of a woman’s body and her accoutrements are all praised, he writes, in “*un fracasso d’insegni, d’imprese, de motti, d’epistole, de sonetti, d’epigrammi, de libri*” [“a clash of devices, emblems, of mottoes, of sonnets, of epigrams, of books”] (“Argomento, p. 4-5). Bruno does not stop there, for in the manner of Shakespeare’s Berowne, he uses theatrical terms like – “*spettacolo*”, “*tragicommedia*”, “*scena*”, “*teatro del mondo*” [spectacle, tragicomedy, theatre of the world] (*Ibid.*) – in his attack on his companions:

Che spettacolo, (o Dio buono) più vile e ignobile può presentare ad un occhio di terso sentiment, che un uomo cogitabundo, afflitto, tormentato, triste, manincoso, per dovenir or freddo, or caldo, or fervente, or pallido ... (*Ibid.*)  
[Good God! What more vile and ignoble sight [i.e. spectacle; *my addition*] can present itself to a clear-sighted eye than a man, brooding, afflicted,



tormented, sorry, melancholy, who waxes now cold, now hot, now boiling,  
now trembling, now pale]

This is the kind of man, he continues, who “distils the elixir of his brain towards putting into thoughts and writ and etching on public documents those endless tortures, those grave agonies” (“*destillando l’elixir del cervello con mettere in concetto, scritto e sigillar in publichi monumenti quelle continue torture, que’ gravi tormenti*”, *ibid.*). In Bruno’s opinion this constitutes a “*scena*” (“Argomento”, p. 3) characterized by imbecility, stupidity, and lewd filthiness (“*imbecille, stolta, e sozza sporcaria*”), constituting in Berowne’s words “a scene of foolery”.

However, when he, too, in the end is exposed as a deceiver and oath-breaker, he surprises all by confessing his love for Rosaline in exalted Petrarchan terms, causing the baffled Navarre to ask “What zeal, what *fury* hath inspired thee now?” ( *Love’s Labour’s Lost* , IV.iii.220, my emphasis), implicitly suggesting that Berowne is in the grip of heroic fury, or Brunian *furore amoroso* . His extended description of Rosaline’s blackness will confirm this:

Is ebony like her? O word divine!  
A wife of such wood were felicity.  
O, who can give an oath? Where is a book,  
That I may swear beauty doth beauty lack  
If that she learn not of her eye to look?  
No face is fair that is not full so black.  
IV.iii.239-44

Bruno repeatedly likens the image of divine beauty and majesty, *l’unica Diana* (i.e. Queen Elizabeth), to Solomon’s beautiful black bride in Canticles, who is upright like the palm, savours of the cedar, and whose neck is like ebony.<sup>35</sup> Bruno quotes the Vulgate text repeatedly and informs us that he first had wanted to call his work *Cantica*.<sup>36</sup> We note that the same imagery crops up in Berowne’s praise of Rosaline and in his quibble on the words “foul” (punning on

“fowl”) and “raven” (79-80),<sup>37</sup> as well as in Dumaine’s description of the black-haired Katherine “As upright as the cedar” (81).<sup>38</sup> Shakespeare dwells long on the paradox of light in darkness, drawing attention to a deeper meaning, and he also foregrounds its strangeness: “O paradox! [...] Dark needs no candles now, for dark is light” (IV.iii.252, 267).<sup>39</sup>

Navarre is critical of Berowne’s praise of Rosaline’s heavenly beauty that is such as to blind the onlookers (IV.iii.215-219), for it is the King’s own chosen lady, the Princess, who is “a gracious moon” (221) and who therefore possesses all the graces, including majesty. Lord Boyet’s appeal to the Princess in the Second Act makes this clear:

Be now as prodigal of all dear grace  
As Nature was in making graces dear  
When she did starve the general world beside  
And prodigally gave them all to you.  
II.i.9-12

Besides, Navarre himself constitutes the male counterpart to this ideal of perfect female sovereignty, being – in Boyet’s words – “the sole inheritor/ Of all perfections that a man may owe” (II.i.5-6). Such distinction in Navarre’s view only belongs to royals and he therefore reminds Berowne in the later scene that Rosaline merely is a lady-in-waiting, an “attending star” (222) on his love. Berowne passionately replies that eminent qualities are infolded in Rosaline, too, because “in her fair cheek, / [...] several worthies make one dignity” (226-227), being suggestive of yet another reference to *trinitas productoria*, that was so central to the cult of the universality of Queen Elizabeth. A good example of such intellectual play in England is Bruno’s interpretation of the Judgement of Paris in *De gli eroici furori* (II.v.184-85), a topic already seen in the works of Lyly, Peele, and Sabie, and illustrated in the Windsor Castle portrait of *Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses* (1569).<sup>40</sup> In these works, the golden apple is presented to

the Queen, not Venus, as in the classical myth, the implication being that Elizabeth embodied in her person the wisdom, chastity, and beauty of the three goddesses; i.e. the contest between Pallas, Diana, and Venus “produces” the trinary perfection of Elizabeth.<sup>41</sup> At court it was an integral part of chivalrous tournaments, masques and elaborate courtship games imbued with “the dialectical language of Neoplatonism” in the decades before Bruno launched his politico-religious campaign.<sup>42</sup> Levenson argues that “at the highest reaches of Elizabethan social life, courtly love had become a complex mode of play,”<sup>43</sup> so that Bruno’s repeated compliments in *De gli eroici furori* to Elizabeth as a perfect prince exploits this cultural and cultic ambience.

As an exponent and theorist of literary Mannerism, Bruno combines genres and forms in a truly innovative manner.<sup>44</sup> In *De gli eroici furori*, he breaks the established emblem book formula producing an innovatory moral dialogue that is also “illustrated” by scripted or “naked emblems” with *inscriptiones* and sonnet *subscriptions* with commentaries. Instead he relies on or alludes to already well-known emblems, which he expects his implied readers to fetch from memory, or recreate visually in their imagination, but for which he provides new interpretations. The innovatory work appears when England had not yet seen the first publication of the type. Samuel Daniel published his translation of Paolo Giovio’s *Imprese*<sup>45</sup> – also without illustrations – in the very same year (1585),<sup>46</sup> and before Geoffrey Whitney in 1586 had his highly derivative, but illustrated, *A Choice of Emblems* printed at Leyden.<sup>47</sup> As an exponent and theorist of literary Mannerism Bruno combines genres and forms in a truly innovative manner. The missing visual emblems thus are virtual illustrations, used as vehicles for his quest for truth and beauty, and as such were available to Shakespeare. Rosalie Colie comments on

this playful working out and presentation of ideas and stresses that “ Bruno delights by establishing literary *topoi* as steps to his teaching [...] abstract[ing] literature as he does so many elements of his thoughts, into its signs and symbolic values. ” <sup>48</sup> I would like to stress that this also true in the case in his prominent use of visuality and mnemonics. He underscores that the frenzies (*furori*) described are not examples of forgetfulness, but of memory ( “ *non son oblió, ma una memoria* ” ), and a “ desire for beauty and goodness ” (I.iii.82-83). Additionally, *De gli eroici furori* is the best example of what I term Bruno’s combinatory and dynamic “ rotational aesthetic, ” <sup>49</sup> realised in individual poems as well as in the combined totality of parts in that work. <sup>50</sup>

Bruno partly shapes the quest for heroic love and knowledge as a pilgrimage and a quest. At the centre of his work, we find a procession conducted by a militia of lovers who carry banners with the said scripted emblems, marking different stages in their education to become worthy lovers. This matches almost exactly what happens in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* , with the exception that Shakespeare’s lovers do not bring on stage physical illustrations. The epistolary love poems are themselves “naked emblems” or scripted emblems, but become visual in performance. Shakespeare develops his own “moving emblems” in rivalry with the emblem book proper, where the lovers come to embody and act out the *subscriptions* . The result is a contest between new genres, where Shakespeare’s art outshines both emblem books and court entertainments. Interestingly, “some strange pastime” or more of the same, is what Navarre and the courtiers choose to devise when they agree to launch a campaign of courtship to conquer their loves after first having been exposed:

LONGAVILLE. Now to plain dealing. Lay these glozes by.  
Shall we resolve to woo these girls of France?

IV.iii.339-340

BEROWNE. We will with some strange pastime solace them,  
Such as the shortness of the time can shape;  
For revels, dances, masques and merry hours  
Forerun fair Love, strewing her way with flowers.

IV.iii.346-349

Like the *furiosi*, they too become warriors, “*una milizia*,” marching under the banners of love; in Berowne’s words, they are “affection’s men-at-arms” (IV.iii.281):

KING. Saint Cupid, then! And, soldiers, to the field!

BEROWNE. Advance your standards, and upon them, lords!

IV.iii.335-336

This campaign, exclusively male in character and scope, will fail gloriously because its message does not take into account the mindset nor consider the feelings of the women they are courting. John R. Mulryne argues that “the nature of the service proffered by the King of Navarre and his servants is misinterpreted as a ‘game’ by the Princess of France and her ladies,”<sup>51</sup> but how could they interpret it differently? It backfires because of its one-sided maleness and focus on conquest, rather than on mutual and shared love, and its vehicle, the ornamented language of artificial courtship, does not constitute a suitable and expedient means for establishing relationships based on sincerity. Having been forewarned about the men’s courtship, the ladies scathingly and wittily rebuff the allegorical language of their suitors, when they stage the play’s second paradramatic inset, the masque of Muscovites and Blackamoors (V.ii.157-264), the first being the play-within-the-play of Navarre, Longaville, and Dumaine as sonnet lovers (IV.iii.16-142), who are overheard by Berowne.

Without going into details about the women's mastery of stichomythia, one cannot avoid noticing that the Muscovites closely echo Bruno's description of the heroic lovers' strenuous pilgrimage in the final dialogue of *De gli eroici furori*. After having sailed all oceans, <sup>52</sup> crossed every rivers, climbed every mountains, and traversed every plain plains" (" *varcati tutti mari, passati tutti fiumi, superati tutti monti, discorse tutte pianure* ", II.v.340-41) in order to reach the island of Britain, Bruno's lovers are received by the nymphs of the grassy banks of the Thames (" *leggiadre Ninfe, ch'a l'erbose sponde / Del Tamesi gentil fate soggiorno* " ["gracious Nymphs, who make your gentle stay / Along the grassy banks of the Thames"], II.v.346-47). Navarre and his party claim to have made a similar "weary" journey asking Boyet to tell the Princess that they "have measured many miles / To tread a measure with her on this grass" (V.ii.184-185); but their plea is rejected, because the women obviously feel that they "are inept role-players, puffed up with [...] narcissistic desire." <sup>53</sup> The women therefore refuse to drop their masks and allow even "one change" (209), whereas Bruno's nine *furiosi*, who worship the face of the goddess whose majesty combines high wisdom, noble chastity, and beauty (" *alta sagezza e nobil castità giunte a bellezza* " ["rare sagacity / With beauty joined, and noble chastity"], II.v.344-45), join the nymphs in a circular dance, i.e., they are engaging in a "change." This trinity of qualities is also the culminating example of infolding in the work.

In *Love's Labour's Lost* the third paradramatic inclusion in the young men's campaign of courtship, the inset pageant of the Nine Worthies (V.ii.538-699), may also have been inspired by Bruno's predilection for the principle of infolding, but this time there is also a distinct possibility that the plotting in Bruno's erudite comedy *Il Candelaio* may have provided a template. When we consider that the Worthies

pageant originally was to be performed by three characters each playing three roles, Bruno's description of his three main comic characters, Bonifacio, Bartolomeo, and Manfurio, in the comes to mind:

to see the subjects clearly in the complex weave of the plot, let us characterize them as: the insipid lover, the sordid miser, the stupid pedant, and note that the insipid one is not without stupidity and sordidity, nor the sordid one without insipidity and stupidity, and that the stupid one is less sordid and insipid than the stupid. <sup>54</sup>

The fact that each character possesses three qualities that vary in degree, so that the trio together exhibit nine qualities, provides a suggestive template for Shakespeare's Worthies as presented by Costard at V.ii . 7-8. The Neo-platonic principle of infolding is present at several points in *Love's Labour's Lost* , but its most memorable instance occurs in the characters that are comic versions of the three kinds of life, the contemplative, the active, and the pleasurable, namely Holofernes, Armado, and Costard. They parody "men who have chosen: wisdom, power, and pleasure." <sup>55</sup> The brief dialogue between Berowne and Costard before the Worthies' entry would seem to confirm the consistent play on the principle of three into one:

COSTARD. O Lord, sir, they would know  
Whether the three Worthies shall come in or no.  
BEROWNE. What, are there but three?  
COSTARD. No, sir, but it is vara fine,  
For every one pursents three.  
BEROWNE. And three times thrice is nine.  
COSTARD. Not so, sir, under correction, sir, I hope it is not so.  
You cannot beg us, sir, I can assure you, sir; we know what we know.  
I hope, sir, three time thrice, sir -  
BEROWNE. Is not nine?  
COSTARD. Under correction, sir, we know whereuntil it doth amount.  
BEROWNE. By Jove, I always took three threes for nine.  
V.ii.485-491

The entire comic plot “undoubtedly [is] of Italian descent”, Christopher Cairns writes, who sees a general influence in the play, possibly from Ariosto.<sup>56</sup> This is a reasonable assumption, but more specifically the idea to let three characters each impersonate three Worthies, which is a comic version of infolding, the ludicrous version of infolding probably derives from Bruno’s deft and witty plotting of *Il Candelaio*. The fact that the pageant fails gloriously is quite another matter.

Deception and masking are central elements in the reformation of the precious Petrarchan courtship games of Navarre, Dumaine, Longaville, and Berowne, and give the play the lightness of a *ballet de cour* with inset *commedia dell’arte* intermezzi. The deft handling of plots and dialogue suggests the mannerist style of the mature Giulio Romano, the only Renaissance artist mentioned in Shakespeare’s plays or poetry, whose work

[...] becomes more elegant and elaborate. Polyphonic linear patterns replace the former statuesque solidity. The figural groups become more complex, the compositional rhythms more serpentine, the drawing more detailed, the chiaroscuro more fitful.<sup>57</sup>

The Princess and her three ladies constitute the fixed point around which the courtiers move in the last act. They hold the key to a comic resolution of the plot, but do not fully believe in the reformation of the young men. Thanks to their counterplot, the male discursive space established in the little academe of schoolmen in the first scene, is by the final scene completely circumscribed. Still, the Princess is no tyrant and openly concedes that their victory was made possible due to the suitors’ “gentleness”:

[I entreat] that you vouchsafe  
In your rich wisdom to excuse or hide  
The liberal opposition of our spirits,  
If over-boldly we have borne ourselves



In the converse of breath; your gentleness  
Was guilty of it.  
V.ii.705-710

She is generous in her verdict, but requires that Navarre and his men be tested and tempered by a trial of twelve months: the men's initial pledge to study and live in celibacy for three years has been wittily contracted into one year, a final example of infolding of three into one. Then, too, the news about the untimely death of the Princess's father, the King of France, allows room for a period of penance, an announcement that moreover is laden with political allusion and topicality. <sup>58</sup>

Despite the obvious differences between the journey of the *furiosi* to prove themselves to be worthy and heroic lovers and that of the young men in *Love's Labour's Lost*, the ending of Bruno's dialogue and the play's finale also have some important features in common such as the works' open endings. *De gli eroici furori* moves from a rejection of vain studies and a base desire for the female body to the veneration of the divine majesty embodied in the "*unica Ninfa*" ["the unique nymph"] who resides on the banks of the Thames (i.e. Queen Elizabeth) and who is equal to "*Diana tra le ninfe*" ["Diana among the nymphs"]. <sup>59</sup> Bruno underscores this process of purification and reformation by establishing a unique feminine discursive space. For after nine dialogues between different male speakers, in the tenth and final dialogue the poet gives the final words to two women, Giulia and Laodomia (II.v.338-39), who serve almost as Beatrice to Dante. A rare case of female discursive space <sup>60</sup> is established when the two women present the author's final vision of love and divine majesty, an obvious compliment to Elizabeth I. Bruno's lovers join the nymphs in the above mentioned dance ("ballando in ruota" ["dancing in a circle"], II.v.354-355] and a song, thus performing the

“change” that is denied the suitors in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* . However, Bruno’s work avoids closure, too, because the *canzone* illustrates the principle of *discordia concors* in the contention of Jove and Neptune, the sky and the sea, for supremacy (II.v.354-57). In short, Bruno’s ending stresses eternal strife, and it may not be too unreasonable to claim that Shakespeare provides a dramatic version of a similar contrast of opposites, when the allegorical figures of Hiems (“Winter”) and Ver (“Spring”) conclude the play with the songs of the cuckoo and the owl in a contest that can never be finally settled. In this manner, dialogue and play share a similar open ending, one that is quite in keeping with how Shakespeare in the courtship game of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* quotes and inventively stages Bruno’s militia of lovers in *De gli eroici furori* . The play’s sequence of comic dramatic insets and use of anti-Petrarchist conceits at the same time “quotes” and transforms the Neo-Platonizing encomiastic strategies in Bruno’s innovatory dialogue.

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## NOTES

1. Giordano Bruno, *On the Heroic Frenzies. A Translation of De Gli Eroici Furori*, by Ingrid D. Rowland, ed. Eugenio Canone, Toronto, Buffalo and London, Toronto University Press, 2013, p. 5.
2. William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. John Arthos, "Introduction", New York, The New American Library, 1965, xxiii. All quotes from the play are from The New Cambridge Shakespeare edition, ed. William C. Carroll, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009.
3. Jill L. Levenson, "Introduction," *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Jill L. Levenson, The Oxford Shakespeare, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 60.
4. See France A. Yates, "The Emblematic Conceit in Giordano Bruno's *De gli eroici furori* and in the Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 6 (1943), 101-121.
5. Giordano Bruno, *De gli eroici furori*, London, Antonio Baio, 1585 and *Il Candelaio, Commedia*, Paris, Guglielmo Giuliani, 1582.
6. Peter M. Daly, *The Emblem in Early Modern Europe: Contributions to the Theory of the Emblem*, Ashgate, Farnham, 2014.
7. Andrea C. Castagno, *The Early Commedia dell'Arte 1520-1621. The Mannerist Context*, New York, Peter Lang, 1994, p. 4.
8. Robin Raybould, *An Introduction to the Symbolic Literature of the Renaissance*, Oxford, Trafford Publishing, 2004, p. 286.
9. Cf. Vincenzo Cartari's *Gli imaginini dei dei degli antichi* (1533), Barthélémy Aneau's *Pictura poesis ut pictura poesis erit* (1552), and Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (1593). For Shakespeare's use of Barthélémy Aneau's emblem "Matrimonii Typus", see my "Shakespeare on Divine Love: 'The Phoenix and the Turtle (1601)'" , *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 83 (Spring, 2013), 23-30.
10. See Castagno's illuminating survey of the chief "historical approaches" to rise of Mannerism and its causes, *The Early Commedia Dell'Arte*, p. 4-14.
11. Jean-Pierre Maquerlot, *Shakespeare and the mannerist Tradition. A reading of five problem plays*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 19.
12. *Ibid.*
13. John Shearman, *Mannerism. Style and Civilization*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1967, p. 169.
14. John Shearman translates part of Lorenzo Giacomini Malespini's funeral oration on the mannerist poet in *Mannerism. Style and Civilization*, p. 161.

15. Diane Bodart, *Renaissance and Mannerism*, New York, Sterling Publishing, 2008, writes that “Nature was not merely portrayed, it had to be imitated, shown as it should be (and not necessarily as it actually was)”, p. 101.
16. Mannerist painters “consistently borrowed images taken from High Renaissance and antique works of art, but that, like a metaphor, the meaning of the chosen exemplars was wrenched from its original context in the process of translation” (Craig Hugh Smith, *Readings in Italian Mannerism*, ed. Liana Girolami Cheney, Peter Lang, New York, 1997, p. xxviii). Smith summarizes the argument of Sidney Freedberg, “Observations on the Painting of the Maniera,” *Art Bulletin* 47(1965), 187-197.
17. The brand of anti-Petrarchism we encounter in Bruno’s “Argomento” is related to that of Domenico di Giovanni, Il Burchiello (1404-1448), Francesco Berni (1498-1535), and Pietro Aretino (1492-1556), whom Bruno also quotes at I.i.44.
18. Yates, *op. cit.*, p. 101-121.
19. From the frontispiece of *Il Candelaio*, *op.cit.*
20. Samuel Daniel, *A Defense of Ryme*, London, 1603, p. 15.
21. Muriel Bradbrook, *The School of Night*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1936, and Frances A. Yates, *A Study of Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1936.
22. Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, London, Kegan Paul, 1964, p. 357.
23. Yates, “The Emblematic Conceit,” *op. cit.*, p. 112.
24. See Shearman, *op. cit.*, p. 163-164, and Castagno who notes that in Rosso “there is no depth through perspective” and how in relation to Parmigianino the “quintessentially Mannerist spirit-form, style, and effect (*effetto maraviglioso*) superseded content” (*op. cit.*, p. 21, 33).
25. Duc de Biron (Berowne) and Duc de Longueville (Longaville) fought alongside the Protestant Henri of Navarre (supported by England), the Duc de Mayenne (Dumaine) was the Guise leader of the Catholic Holy League (supported by Spain) (see H.R. Woudhuysen, “Introduction,” in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, The Arden Shakespeare, 1998, p. 68).
26. On the topic of self-sovereignty and Bruno, see Gilberto Sacerdoti, “Self-sovereignty and Religion in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*,” in ed. Laura Tosi and Shaul Bassi, *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2011, p. 83-104. Sacerdoti relates the play to *Lo Spaccio della bestia trionfante*, London, 1584, interpreting the hunting scene as nothing but “an emblem [...] which represents on the stage a model of arch-self-sovereignty,” p. 93.
27. Shearman points to “the inversion of the classical [...] relation of form and content” in mannerist art works and “the tendency to use language that adds ornament rather than carrying sense” (*op. cit.*, p. 163, 164)

28. Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969, p. 225-226.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 120f.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 242-44.
31. Catherine Bates, "Love and Courtship," in ed. Alexander Leggatt, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Comedy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 102-122 (111).
32. Giordano Bruno, *La cena de le ceneri* (London, 1584), in ed. Giovanni Gentile, *Opere italiane*, 2 vols, Bari, Laterza, 1925-1927, I.34. Cf. Roy Eriksen, *The Forme of Faustus Fortunes. A Study of the Tragedie of Doctor Faustus (1616)*, Atlantic Highlands, Conn., and Oslo, Humanities and Solum, 1987, p. 59-105 (75). Marlowe's play is cited from eds. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, *Doctor Faustus: A- and B-texts (1604, 1616)*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1993.
33. Yates, "The Emblematic Conceit", *op. cit.*, p. 115.
34. Cyrus Hoy, "Jacobean Tragedy and the Mannerist Style", *Shakespeare Survey* 26 (1973), 49-67 (56).
35. He also discusses beauty in painting in relation to obscurity and light at II.i. 214-215.
36. Bruno, *Eroici furori*, *op. cit.*, p. 8-9. In Canticles, Solomon's bride is described be both as black and upright, savouring of the cedar of Lebanon: "*Nigra sum sed formosa filiae Hierusalem/ Sicut tabernacula Cedar sicut pelles Salomonis* (1.4) ["I am blacke [...] but comelie, as the fruits of Kedar, & as the curtines of Salomón"] (*Canticum canticorum*, in *Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. Roger Gryson et al., Nördlingen, C.H. Beck, 2003, p. 997-1002 [my emphasis]). I quote the English text of *The Geneva Bible*. A facsimile of the 1560 edition, Madison, Milwaukee, and London, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969, ed. Lloyd E. Berry. In the context of Bruno's prominent use of Canticles Berowne's phrase "To see [...] profound Solomon to tune a jig" (IV.iii.159-163, 160, 165) would appear to allude to this symbolism.
37. In Canticles the bride is repeatedly compares to a dove or turtle (4:1; 281recto), whereas it is Solomon who is said to have raven black hair (5:11, 281verso).
38. The mention of the cedar immediately bring to mind the central image of the cedar in Canticles, where the bride is likened both to a palm tree and a tower, and said to have garments that savour like the fruit of the cedar (4:11, 281verso), whereas the bridegroom is directly compared to the cedar (5:15; 281verso).
39. See Camilla Caporicci's discussion elsewhere in this publication, "Lady Rosaline's Darkness: Linguistic Games and Deep Meanings", in Laetitia Sansonetti, Yan Brailowsky, Sophie Chiari, Line Cottagnies, Anne-Valérie Dulac, Denis Lagae-Devoldere, Sophie Lemerrier-Goddard, Anne-Marie Miller-Blaise, Ladan Niayesh and Michèle Vignaux, eds., *Nouvelles Lectures de Love's Labour's Lost*, *Publications de la Société Française Shakespeare* 32,

2015, <http://shakespeare.revues.org/2911>, accessed 1 September 2015. We are also reminded that Marlowe alludes to the same symbolism when describing Tamburlaine's reaction to the death of Zenocrate: "Black is the beauty of the brightest day" (2*Tamburlaine*, II.iv.1).

40. Wind, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

41. See Bruno's exposition of the myth in *De gli eroici furori* (II.v.xi.184-89), as a comment on Emblem xi ("Pulchriora detur" ["To the fairest"]).

42. Wind, *op. cit.*, p. 74. Wind sees these games as being disinterested, but that would only had been on the surface, because rivaling factions at court where jockeying for power and access to the Queen.

43. Levenson, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

44. Maria Rika Maniates argues that *De Vinculis in genere* is the first comprehensive mannerist aesthetic, *Mannerism in Italian Music and Culture*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1979. For Bruno's treatise, see Albano Biondi, ed., *De vinculi in genere*, Pordenone, Edizione Bibliotheca dell'Immagine, 1986.

45. Paolo Giovio, *Dialogo delle imprese militari et amoroze*, Rome, Antonio Barre, 1555.

46. Samuel Daniel, *The Worthy Tract of Paulus Jovius, containing a Discourse of Rare Inventions ... called Imprese, with a Preface* (London, 1585). Daniel worked with the second edition by Girolamo Ruscelli, who contributed an introductory essay on *Imprese* (Venice, Zitelli, 1556).

47. Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes and other Devises, for the moste parte gathered out of sundrie writers, Englished and moralised, and divers newly devised*, Leyden, Plantin Press, 1586.

48. Rosalie Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica. The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966, p.111.

49. See Roy Eriksen, "Real and Virtual Illustration: Visual Memory and Early Modern Speaking Pictures", *Journal of Illustration Studies* (2013), 1-18 (6).

50. See my analysis of some of his circular poems, *The Forme of Faustus Fortunes*, *op.cit.*, p. 59-102 (esp. 64-81).

51. Muriel C. Bradbrook, "Courtier and Courtesy: Castiglione, Lyly and Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*," in John R. Mulryne and Margareth Shewring, eds., *The Theatre of the English and Italian Renaissance*, London, MacMillan, 1991, p. 161-178 (177).

52. Rowland leaves out the translation of the phrase "vacati tutti mari" (341), which is supplied here.

53. Edward Berry, "Laughing at 'others'", in Leggatt, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 121-138 (130).

54. *The Genius of the Italian Theatre*, edited by Eric Bentley, New York, The New American Library, 1964, p. 199.

55. Wind, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

56. Christopher Cairns, "Ariosto's Comedies and the Italian 'Erasmian' Connection in Shakespeare and Jonson," in J.R. Mulryne and Margareth Shewring, eds., op. cit., p. 113-137 (127).

57. Frederick Hartt, *Giulio Romano*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1958, p. 36-37. Romano is mentioned in the last scene of the *Winter's Tale*, V.ii.95-100.

58. The allusions run deeper and more indirectly in *Love's Labour's Lost* than in Marlowe's and Shakespeare's political plays. For that aspect see Richard Hillman, *Marlowe, Shakespeare, and the Politics of France*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002.

59. We recall that Navarre, thinking the disguised Rosaline is the Princess, addresses her as "bright moon" (i.e. Diana) and her women as "these thy stars" (V.ii.206).

60. For female space and female chastity, see Georgianna Ziegler, "My lady's chamber: Female space, female chastity in Shakespeare", *Textual Practice* 4 n° 1 (Spring, 1990), 73-90.

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## ABSTRACTS

Among the several works in Italian vernacular that Giordano Bruno surreptitiously printed during his stay in London in 1583-85, *De gli eroici furori* is the work that exerted the greatest impact on Elizabethan contemporary poets and dramatists. Ideas and emblems presented in the works of “the mad priest of the sun” (in Robert Greene’s phrase) crop up in the plays and poetry of Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, and Andrew Marvell in particular. In *Love’s Labour’s Lost* Shakespeare seizes on Bruno’s extreme anti-Petrarchism and mannerist techniques in his critique of the little academe of courtiers who reject love and break their vows. He playfully reworks Bruno’s use of the Neo-Platonist principle of infolding in the moral dialogue, which the philosopher-poet had already successfully adapted in a dramatic form in *Il Candelaio*, one of the best examples of Italian *commedia erudita* (1583). When Shakespeare creates his own version of this critique in a comic setting, he transforms the philosopher-poet’s procession of lovers under the influence of heroic frenzy (*furore eroico*) and provides one of the earliest examples of an active use of emblems on the Elizabethan stage. In Shakespeare’s unconventional and melancholy comedy, the main butt of this tongue-in-cheek treatment is Giordano Bruno’s namesake, Berowne.

Parmi les œuvres de Giordano Bruno qui furent publiées en italien à Londres lors de son séjour entre 1583 et 1585, *De gli eroici furori* est celle qui a le plus profondément influencé les poètes et dramaturges élisabéthains. Les idées et emblèmes présentés dans les textes de « ce fou, prêtre du soleil » (selon l’expression de Robert Greene) se retrouvent dans les pièces et la poésie de Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare et Andrew Marvell. Dans *Peines d’amour perdues*, l’anti-pétrarquisme de Shakespeare, manifeste dans la critique de l’Académie et de ses gentilshommes ascétiques, n’est pas sans rappeler celui de *De gli eroici furori*. Shakespeare reprend le principe néo-platonicien de l’enchâssement déployé dans le dialogue de Bruno et repris avec succès sous une forme dramatique dans *Il Candelaio*, l’un des meilleurs exemples italiens de *commedia erudita* (1583). Quand Shakespeare reprend cette critique à son compte dans un mode comique, il transforme la procession des amoureux en proie à une fureur héroïque (*furore eroico*), adaptant ainsi la forme emblématique sur la scène élisabéthaine. Dans cette comédie mélancolique qui revisite le genre de la comédie, Berowne, dont le nom fait écho à celui du philosophe et poète italien, est le personnage central de la réécriture ironique de Shakespeare.



# INDEX

**Keywords:** anti-Petrarchanism, Bruno Giordano, courtship, dialogue, emblematics, infolding, Love's Labour's Lost, Mannerism

**Mots-clés:** anti-pétrarquisme, Bruno Giordano, dialogue, emblèmes, enchâssement, Maniérisme, Peines d'amour perdues, séduction

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# Eulogizing Black in *Love's Labour's Lost*

Armelle Sabatier

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In his study of the parodic treatment of Petrarchan conventions in *Love's Labours' Lost*, Neal Goldstein claims that the often-quoted line on the beauty of black ("And therefore is she born to make black fair," IV.iii.252) is merely an example of Shakespeare's anti-Petrarchism:

Berowne's mockery is aimed, of course, at the Petrarchan notion of the ideal beloved, her golden hair loosed to the breeze. Even a skimming of the love poetry of the period will prove the point – Petrarch's Laura and Astrophil's Stella are golden-haired. And an examination of the many quattrocento renderings of the Virgin can only reinforce the notion.<sup>1</sup>

Despite his accurate reading of stereotypical beauties in the Renaissance, Goldstein tends to actually "skim" through the seeming antithesis of black and fair in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*. Berowne's eulogy of black in IV.iii represents one discourse on female beauty, a subject rousing varied debates among the characters who often voice opposite opinions on the interpretation of the polysemous word "fair". Beyond its initial connotations implying that a woman's outward appearance is pleasant to men's eyes, the term "fair" can sometimes allude to a person's white complexion or describe blonde hair, two main features of the

Renaissance archetypal female beauty. In a play hinging upon constant reversals and challenges to poetical and rhetorical discourses on beauty, or more broadly fairness, one might wonder how to value and interpret the actual scope of Berowne's celebration of the fairness of black.

## Fair vs. Black: Shakespeare's stereotypical beauties?

The binary opposition between black and fair, dark and light structuring Berowne's celebration of Rosaline's dark beauty might have sounded rather familiar to an Elizabethan audience insofar as it calls to mind several eulogies of blackness voiced in Shakespeare's early comedies and tragedies. Many of the plays listed in Francis Meres' *Palladis Tamia*,<sup>2</sup> that can thus be dated before 1598, explore the chromatic dichotomy between black and white to varying degrees. In one of Shakespeare's first tragedies, *Titus Andronicus*, performed around 1594, these opposite colours are used to dramatize the immoral love of the black Moor Aaron and the fair Tamora, Queen of Goths and new wife to the Roman emperor. Aaron launches into a defence of blackness when the Nurse, bringing his newborn baby on stage, describes his and fair Tamora's son as "a joyless, dismal black, and sorrowful issue" (IV.ii.68). Outraged by these comments, Aaron denounces the duplicity of white people:

What, What, ye sanguine shallow-hearted boys,  
Ye white-limed walls, ye alehouse painted signs!  
Coal-black is better than another hue,  
For all the water in the ocean  
Can never turn the swan's black legs to white  
Although she lave them hourly in the flood.

*Titus Andronicus*, IV.ii.99-105<sup>3</sup>

White is perceived here as the colour of corruption, cowardice and hypocrisy, whilst black symbolises truth and stability, encapsulated by the unchanging colour of the swan's legs. Although *Titus Andronicus* is not concerned with Petrarchism and even if devilish Aaron is not a character meant to arouse the spectator's sympathy and approval, his speech already foreshadows the chromatic readings and interpretations of black and white in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

*The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, two other comedies mentioned by Meres along with *Love's Labour's Lost*, present their audiences with rather unconventional discourses on female beauty, both in a context of male rivalry and one of friendship. In the opening act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Helena is confused by her former lover Demetrius's attraction to Hermia's beauty: "Call you me fair? That 'fair' again unsay. / Demetrius loves your fair - O happy fair" (I.i.181-182). But once Demetrius and Lysander's visions are altered by Puck's magic juice in the forest, both young men start praising Helena as "the princess of pure white" (III.i.144) while they reject Hermia for being an "Ethiope" and a "tawny Tartar" (III.i.257 and 263), even though she is no doubt as "fair" as she used to be (III.i.274). *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* similarly revolves around competing female beauties heightened by the combat between fair and black. Speed warns his master Valentine that his vision of Sylvia's beauty is "deformed" (II.i.59) in that her beauty could be artificial: "Marry, sir, so painted to make her fair that no man counts of her beauty" (II.i.55-56). Whilst the adjective "fair" primarily alludes to Sylvia's beauty, the verb "painted" hints that this beauty results from the use of cosmetics, mainly red for the lips and cheeks, and white powder to heighten a woman's complexion. When Proteus, Valentine's best friend and

Julia's lover, lays his eyes on the fair Sylvia, his vision is in turn "deformed": "And Sylvia –witness heaven that made her fair – / Shows Julia but a swarthy Ethiop" (II.vi.25-26). This celebration of a more radiant whiteness reveals Proteus's distortion of reality since Julia represents archetypal fairness. Indeed, although her skin is as white as Sylvia's, her hair is naturally blonde or golden ("yellow"), while Sylvia's is auburn, which was considered as whitish blonde in Shakespeare's time ("Her hair is auburn, mine perfect yellow", IV.iv.187).<sup>4</sup> These theatrical reversals of conventional fairness anticipate the poet's challenge of Petrarchan white beauty in the *Sonnets to the Dark Lady* where black is "fairest in my judgement's place" (Sonnet 131, l. 4).

Beyond the influence of neo-platonism in the Renaissance,<sup>5</sup> the black-and-white dualism, which was deeply ingrained in European culture, may also have been partly shaped by the Elizabethans' perception of colours. In a pre-Newtonian world, scientific theories related to vision still largely relied on Aristotle's works. According to him, colours emerged from objects depending on the intensity of light and were then ranged in a spectrum of brightness and darkness, starting from white and ending with black.<sup>6</sup> The intermediary colours were understood as a coalescence of these two colours. In *Colour and Culture*, the art historian John Gage structures Aristotle's spectrum as follows: black, grey, deep blue, leek-green, violet, crimson, yellow, white.<sup>7</sup> Hence, fairness encompasses the whole of the chromatic spectrum related to light, ranging from white to yellow or golden.

These eulogies of black, including Berowne's, were voiced at a time when black was gradually endowed with new positive values. In his invaluable study of black, Michel Pastoureau has demonstrated that the standard colour of the devil in the Middle Ages came to



symbolise virtue and austerity in European courts as early as the thirteenth century.<sup>8</sup> English royalty favoured that colour, and Edward I and Richard II were both known for wearing black garments, while Elizabeth I promoted black as well as white as her official colours.<sup>9</sup> Besides, black was now part of the features of archetypal literary beauty, since its darkness highlighted the beauty of white. Even before Petrarch, European courtly literature was influenced by various *artes poeticae* listing fixed metaphors to write the portrait of perfect beauty, such as the rhetorical portrait of Helen of Troy, the quintessence of female beauty according to Matthew of Vendôme in his *Ars Versificatoria* (published in 1175) where “Her dark eyebrows, neatly lined twin arches, / Set off skin that is like the Milky Way.”<sup>10</sup> Herman Pleij underlines that brown eyes were perceived as another essential feature of female beauty, unlike green eyes, which were the sign of the devil and, when combined with blonde hair, signified folly.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, in the Renaissance, fairness was perceived as a whiter shade of white, as is evidenced by many Renaissance treatises describing female beauty, such as Agnolo Firenzuola’s *Dialogo delle bellezze delle donne* (1541) where the author draws a distinction between fair and white. According to him, “candida è quella cosa che, insieme con la bianchezza, ha un certo splendore, come è l’avorio; e bianca è quella che non risplende, come la neve.”<sup>12</sup> In his analysis of “Shakespearean beauty marks”, Stephen Greenblatt claims that “Shakespeare often conveys the sense of beauty’s radiance with the word ‘fair’ which he uses more than seven hundred times in his work. ‘Fair’ can denote lovely, clear, fine, or clean, but it also has the distinct sense of shining lightness.”<sup>13</sup> The radiance inherent in fair, this particular shade of white, is

anatomised by many characters in *Love's Labour's Lost*, who debunk all discourses on fairness, bringing to the fore its dark side.

## The darkness of fairness

Right from her first appearance on stage, the character of the Princess rejects rhetorical ornamentation when she claims that her beauty “needs not the painted flourish of [...] praise” (II.i.14). Ironically enough, her attending ladies perceive fairness and beauty in a very different way. Maria conjures up the word “fair” to allude to Longaville’s virtue: “The only soil of his fair virtue’s gloss, / If virtue’s gloss will stain with any soil, / Is a sharp wit matched with too blunt a will” (II.i.47-49). Likewise, Rosaline’s sensitiveness to Berowne’s “fair tongue” and “gracious words” (II.i.72 and 73) highlights the linguistic sense of the term “fair”, which can refer to elegant wording (*Oxford English Dictionary*, sense 3). Annoyed by her ladies’ “bedecking ornaments of praise” (II.i.79), the Princess challenges the King’s hypocritical welcome:

KING. Fair Princess, welcome to the court of Navarre.

PRINCESS. ‘Fair’ I give you back again, and ‘welcome’ I have not yet. The roof of this court is too high to be yours, and welcome to the wide fields too base to be mine.

(II.i.90-93)

The Princess’s rejection of the stereotyped “fair Princess” interjection (II.i.90) to welcome her is aimed at exposing the King’s shallow language, since his words do not correspond to the reality of the conditions in which she is received – not at ‘the court of Navarre’ at all, but kept outdoor in the fields.

In a mirror-like effect, the Lords comment the beauty of the Princess’s attending ladies, focusing more particularly on their whiteness:

LONGAVILLE. I beseech you, a word. What is she in the white?  
BOYET. A woman sometimes, and you saw her in the light.  
LONGAVILLE. Perchance light in the light. I desire her name.  
(II.i.193-195)

The pun on lightness and wantonness endows white and fair with sexual innuendos that also pervade Berowne's portrait of Rosaline as "a whitely wanton with a velvet brow / With two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes" (III.i.188-190). Although Rosaline partly corresponds to the rhetorical portrait of the fair Helen of Troy set by Vendôme, the sensuality and bawdiness attributed to white undermines conventional discourses on fairness. The soft touch of the black velvet reinforces this eroticised portrait of Rosaline. Beyond the rhetoric of this anti-Petrarchan portrait, the shade of black used to depict Rosaline's brow is evocative of some pictorial techniques to prepare certain types of black. In his *Treatise Concerning the Arte of Limning* (c. 1600), the Elizabethan miniaturist Nicholas Hilliard contends that "velvet black" is the "best black", a shade obtained by burning ivory: "the best black is velvet black, which is ivory burnt in a crucible and luted, that air enter not."<sup>14</sup> This blending of white and black is rendered in his portraits, more precisely in the painting of eyes. The luminosity of velvet black enabled the painter to add lustre to the sitter's eye, which was heightened by white. As Raphaëlle Costa de Beauregard has shown in her study on *Silent Elizabethans*: "black and white are juxtaposed in the painting of the eye, these two bright colours being the source of the sharpest conceivable chromatic contrast, as Hilliard sees it."<sup>15</sup> To a certain extent, the radiance of Rosaline's fairness is created by the delicate mingling of white and luminous black.

The conventional beauty of white is also challenged by Moth, Armado's page, when he reminds his master that white and red, the traditional "marks" of European beauties are artificial: "Most

maculate thoughts, master, are masked under such colours” (I.ii.76). Critical studies devoted to the role of cosmetics in Elizabethan society have demonstrated that women’s – and to a certain extent men’s, especially courtiers – white complexions were far from being natural. Women, including Queen Elizabeth herself, resorted to bleaching and whitening beauty products that were (and still largely are today) highly toxic.<sup>16</sup> Aaron’s diatribe against the “white-limed walls” and the “painted signs” in *Titus Andronicus* reveals the reality of the artificial complexions of white women and of some men in Shakespeare’s time. The accumulation of white powders and bleaching resulted in the production of “masks of youth”, to take up Roy Strong’s phrase to describe Queen Elizabeth’s white face in her later portraits.<sup>17</sup> To a certain extent, these artificial white masks were visible on stage through the boy actors’ make-up. The literary and linguistic games related to the ambiguity of white are constantly mirrored on stage with the supposedly fair ladies impersonated by boy actors wearing cosmetics. The reality of the stage production exposes the artificiality of discourses on fairness, which look like mere “plast’ring art” (*Hamlet*, III.i.51).

The dubious nature of whiteness and fairness is brought to the fore in act IV. This act opens onto the Princess’s renewed criticism of discourses on fairness when she conflates the hunter’s phrase “fairest shoot” (IV.i.10) with another spurious compliment about her beauty. She then launches into another diatribe against the shallowness of rhetoric:

PRINCESS. Nay, never paint me now.  
Where fair is not, praise cannot mend the brow.  
Here, good my glass, take this for telling true;  
(Giving him money)  
Fair payment for foul words is more than due.  
FORESTER. Nothing but fair is that which you inherit.  
PRINCESS. See, see, my beauty will be saved by merit!

O heresy in fair, fit for these days!  
(IV.i.16-22)

Through her constant challenge of the word “fair”, the Princess throws light upon the deceiving nature of fair words, as they can be analogous to specious words and flattery (*Oxford English Dictionary*, sense 4), another negative aspect of “fair”. The Princess’s criticism is immediately illustrated by Don Armado’s letter to Jaquenetta, which is brought on the stage and read by Boyet. Don Armado’s abuse of fair words (“that thou art fair is most infallible”; “More fairer than fair, beautiful than beauteous”, IV.i.61-62 and 63-64) ironically introduces the sonnet-reading scene, where fledgling sonneteers labour to lay down fair words to celebrate female beauties.

## Making black fair?

In the light of all these variations on fair and white, Berowne’s intention to “make black fair” (IV.iii.252) is tinged with the colour of irony. The sonnet-reading scene opens with Berowne’s soliloquy, which reveals his infatuation with dark Rosaline:

The King, he is hunting the deer; I am coursing myself. They have pitched a toil; I am toiling in a pitch, pitch that defiles. Defile, a foul word. [...] I will not love; if I do, hang me! I’faith, I will not. O, but her eye! By this light, but for her eye, I would love her – yes for her two eyes. Well, I do nothing in the world but lie, and lie in my throat. By heaven, I do love, and it hath taught me to rhyme, and to be melancholy. And here is part of my rhyme, and here my melancholy.  
(IV.iii.1-3 and 7-14)

Whilst the pun on the term “pitch” calls to mind Rosaline’s dark eyes (“two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes”, IV.iii.190), Berowne’s love is metamorphosed into a “black sticky substance”<sup>18</sup> that corrupts his soul (“defile”). While suggesting the part of the melancholy lover and poet (“it hath taught me to rhyme, and to be

melancholy”, IV.iii.13-4), a humour signified by black bile since Antiquity,<sup>19</sup> the term “pitch” is also evocative of ink, another “sticky substance” which remains invaluable for the rhymes on melancholy. Berowne is turned into the mirror image of the pedant Armado who complains in one of his letters of being “besieged with sable-coloured melancholy, [...] the black oppressing humour to the most wholesome physic of thy health-giving air” (I.i.221-223). This new role as a dark poet is undermined by the constant sexual innuendos pervading Berowne’s supposedly serious soliloquy, as when he alludes to the ambiguity of the source of black – Rosaline’s two or one eye(s) which may evoke her vagina, as is suggested by H. R. Woudhuysen in his Arden edition.<sup>20</sup> Before mocking the King’s and his followers’ sonnets, Berowne also positions himself in the shadow of poetic melancholy, ready to praise his Rosa/eline. But Ladan Niayesh notes that the near homophony between Berowne and the colour brown favours the character’s proximity to his dark lady,<sup>21</sup> whilst the name Rosaline can ironically evoke a white, rather than a pink rose. Berowne’s impersonation of the love sonneteer and courtier in this soliloquy is reminiscent of the young aristocrat pictured by Nicholas Hilliard in *Young Man among the Roses* (c. 1585-95),<sup>22</sup> produced prior to the first performance of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. In this miniature portrait, a handsome brown-haired young man, dressed in black and white, leans against a tree, surrounded by white roses. The chromatic contrast between white and black in this painting is another example of one of the typical features of Hilliard’s aesthetic that has already been mentioned, and this play on the opposition of colours may well have been aimed at pleasing Queen Elizabeth through choosing her favourite colours. The celebration of the beauty of the rose, a longstanding literary conceit that is conjured up in the opening lines to Shakespeare’s

very first sonnet (“From fairest creatures we desire increase, / That thereby beauty’s rose might never die”) <sup>23</sup> was also imbued with political connotations, as the union of the red and white roses was part of the Tudor political propaganda.

Whilst the King, Longaville and Dumaine enter the stage in turn to read their sonnets, Berowne takes on the role of the cynical poet ready “to whip hypocrisy” (IV.iii.130) and rejects artificial elements in the poetic tradition of sonnet writing, such as the literary conceit of the blazon (IV.iii.180-182). The three sonnets seem to gradually move from light and brightness with the metaphors of the “golden sun” and the “silver moon” used by the King (IV.iii.23 and 27) to darkness, as Longaville’s “fair sun” (IV.iii.66) is equated with “an amber-coloured raven” by Berowne (IV.iii.85), and Dumaine’s eroticised sonnet on “a blossom passing fair” (IV.iii.100) strikes a comparison between fairness and blackness (“Thou for whom Jove would swear / Juno but an Ethiop were,” IV.iii.114-115). Berowne’s satire of this “scene of foolery” (IV.iii.160) is interrupted by the production of Berowne’s letter to Rosaline that was sent by mistake to Jaquenetta. After “whipping hypocrisy”, Berowne is asked to remove the mask of the cynical poet to read his own version of fairness: “Of all complexions the culled sovereignty / Do meet as at a fair in her fair cheek” (IV.iii.230-231). Niayesh remarks that the pun on the term “fair” understood as both beauty and marketplace metamorphoses Rosaline into a “mere commodity”. <sup>24</sup> Berowne’s awkward stylistic exercise on the praise of female beauty encourages his fellow sonneteers to turn his celebration of black fairness into ridicule.

The poetical and satirical anatomy of Berowne’s sonnet is structured around an agonistic exchange, which is reminiscent of the rhetorical exercise of *disputatio* where two parties present opposed views on a

subject. To defend his vision of black beauty, Berowne relies on the chromatic combat between black and white, showing the duplicity of white through the biblical figure of the white devil (“Devils soonest tempt, resembling spirits of light”, IV.iii.253)<sup>25</sup> or the controversial nature of cosmetics already raised by Moth in I.ii. (“It mourns that painting and usurping hair / Should ravish doters with a false aspect,” IV.iii.255-256, and “Your mistresses dare never come in rain, / For fear their colours should be washed away,” IV.iii.266-7). The most surprising conceit used by Berowne remains his interpretation of the beauty of ebony:

KING. By heaven, thy love is black as ebony.  
BEROWNE. Is ebony like her? O word divine!  
A wife of such wood were felicity.  
(IV.iii.238-241)

Berowne’s celebration of black fairness or fair blackness sounds ironically Petrarchan, since ebony is promoted to the same rank of divinity as Petrarch’s Laura is. This fledgling, yet cynical poet who accepts to step down from the “sky” where he was acting as a “demi god” (IV.iii.71) resumes the stereotypical speech used by the pedant Armado that he mocked in the opening act. In his letter, Armado used chromatic clichés to allude to the act of writing: “Then for the place Where – where, I mean, I did encounter that obscene and most preposterous event that draweth from my snow-white pen the ebon-coloured ink, which here thou viewest, beholdest, surveyest, or seest” (I.i.228-232). Berowne’s celebration of fair blackness is ironically connected to this very first chromatic opposition where the snow-white pen is evocative of the archetypal Petrarchan simile to describe white. The chromatic intertextual echo implied by ebony suggests that Berowne is another pseudo Petrarchan poet,<sup>26</sup> drawing the beauty of Rosaline in ink (that is, only in words), while his celebration of black is purely rhetorical. The chromatic contrast



between the white page and the black ink is conjured up in Shakespeare's *Sonnets* in order to celebrate the poetry's ability to preserve the image of the beloved for eternity: "that in my black ink my love may still shine bright" (*Sonnet* 65, 14). Hence, through the intertwined images of ebony and ink, Berowne might be writing down Rosaline's beauty to preserve the memory of his beloved for ever and ever or for his own posterity as a budding poet, thus applying the King's Horatian exhortation to "let fame, that all hunt after in their lives, / Live registered upon our brazen tombs" (I.i.1-2). His chromatic use of antithesis, in which white is endowed with negative meanings, sounds all the more ironic as Berowne indulges in the Petrarchan metaphor of the white hand to praise Rosaline's beauty before his celebration of black ("Ask for her, / And to her white hand see thou do commend / This sealed-up counsel," III.i.161-3), while later he mistakes the Princess's white hand for Rosaline's ("white-handed mistress," V.ii.230).

His fellow sonneteers relish in challenging his supposedly fresh poetics of colours when they compare Rosaline to a chimney-sweeper:

DUMAINE. To look like her are chimney-sweepers black.

LONGAVILLE. And since her time are colliers counted bright.

(IV.iii.262-263)

Dumaine and Longaville not only turn into ridicule his defence of Rosaline's darkness, but also expose the shallowness of his discourse. By focusing on the vegetal nature of ebony, they bring to the fore its evanescent materiality as the wood ends up as a burnt residue, dirty ashes smearing chimney-sweepers' faces. Through the metaphor of soot and coal, Dumaine and Longaville mock Berowne's rhetorical exercise on the beauty of black, insofar as the seeming solidity and radiance of ebony can be reduced to simple ashes, just like his fair

discourse which is both attractive and specious. Even in the *Sonnets*, a more experienced Shakespeare challenges his own celebration of black beauty. After reversing Petrarchan stereotypical white beauty by “making black fair”, the poet discovers the Lady’s “heart of darkness”: “For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright, / Who art as black as hell, as dark as night” (*Sonnet* 147, l. 13-14). In *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, the dark nature of black is exposed by Katherine in the final act when she reminds Rosaline that her beauty is not pure:

ROSALINE. What’s your dark meaning, mouse, of this light word?

KATHERINE. A light condition in a beauty dark.

ROSALINE. We need more light to find your meaning out.

KATHERINE. You’ll mar the light by taking it in snuff,  
Therefore I’ll darkly end the argument.

ROSALINE. Look what you do, you do it still i’t’h’dark.

(V.ii.19-24)

The polyptoton built around the adjective dark is not only reminiscent of the Renaissance prejudice against black beauties who were perceived as lascivious,<sup>27</sup> but also calls to mind the pun on light and bawdiness voiced by the male characters in II.i. All in all, the discourses on female beauties, whether black or white, seem to be constantly undermined by the reality of desire and lust. By turning into ridicule all literary speeches on female beauties and interrupting the men’s retreat, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* counters the characters’ vision of women to make them understand that women are desirable and have desires too. This veiled invitation to discard the masks of literature and rhetoric entices young roses to fully bloom, as Boyet reminds the Princess at the end of the masque in V.ii: “Fair ladies masked are roses in their bud; / Dismasked, their damask sweet commixture shown, / Are angels vailing clouds, or roses blown.” (V.ii.295-297).

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## NOTES

1. Neal Goldstein, “ *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and the Renaissance Vision of Love”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 25.3, 1974, 335-350, quote from p. 340.

2. The plays mentioned by Meres are *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* , *The Comedy of Errors* , *Love Labours Lost* , *Love Labours Won* , *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* , *The Merchant of Venice* , *Richard II* , *Richard III* , *Henry IV* , *King John* , *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet* . See E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* , Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1930, vol.1, p. 244.

3. All quotations from Shakespeare’s plays, with the exception of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* , are taken from *The Oxford Shakespeare . The Complete Works* , eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998.

4. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* , auburn etymologically alluded to a shade of yellowish white. The sense of golden or reddish brown that is used today appeared in the sixteenth century. However, Shakespeare always resorts to the original meaning of this word in his texts.

5. Camilla Caporicci explores the impact of neo-Platonism and Petrarchism in her contribution to this volume.

6. See for details his treatise *De sensu et sensibilibus*.

7. John Gage, *Colour and Culture* , London, Thames and Hudson, 1993, p.12-13.

8. Michel Pastoureau, *Noir: Histoire d’une couleur*, Paris, Seuil, 2008. The book is also available in English: *Black: The History of a Color*, trans. J. Gladding, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2009.

9. See their portraits reproduced in Roy Strong, *The English Icon: Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraiture* , London, Paul Mellon, 1969.

10. Quoted in Herman Pleij, *Colors Demonic and Divine* , *Shades of Meaning in the Middle Ages and After* , trans. D. Webb, New York, Columbia University Press, p. 52.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 50. See also Michel Pastoureau's recent study of green: *Vert: Histoire d'une couleur*, Paris, Seuil, 2014; also available in English as *Green: The History of a Color*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014. In his book devoted to blue, Michel Pastoureau signals that blue eyes were perceived as a new "mark" of beauty in the Renaissance (*Bleu: Histoire d'une couleur*, Paris, Seuil, 2000; also available in English: *Blue: The History of a Color*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001).
12. Agnolo Firenzuola, *Opere*, ed. D. Maestri, Torino, UTET, 1977, p. 731. Here is an English translation: "Fair is a colour that besides being white, also has a certain lustre, as ivory does while white is that which does not glow such as snow" (Agnolo Firenzuola, *On the Beauty of Women*, trans. Konrad Eisenbichler and Jacqueline Murray, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992, p. 15).
13. Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespeare's Freedom*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2011, p. 25.
14. Quoted in Nicholas Hilliard, *Treatise Concerning the Arte of Limning*, ed. R. K. R. Thornton and T. G. S. Cain, Manchester, Mid Northumberland Arts Group and Carcanet New Press, 1981, p. 91.
15. Raphaëlle Costa de Beaugard, *Silent Elizabethans*, Montpellier, Collection Astraea, 2000, p. 87.
16. See for instance Annette Drew-Bear, *Painted Faces on the Renaissance Stage. The Moral Significance of Face-Painting Conventions*, Cranbury, Associated University Press, 1994; Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2006.
17. Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1987, p. 147.
18. This interpretation is given by H. R. Woudhuysen in his edition of *Love's Labour's Lost*, London, Bloomsbury, 1998, p. 199.
19. See Sujata Iyengar, *Shakespeare's Medical Language. A Dictionary*, London, Bloomsbury, 2011, p. 73-78.
20. *Op. cit.*, p. 199.
21. See her contribution to this volume.
22. This picture is held by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Roy Strong provides a full analysis of this miniature in *The Cult of Elizabeth. Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry*, London, Pimlico, 1999, p. 56-83.
23. Sonnet 1, l.1-2.
24. See her contribution to this volume.
25. See *2 Corinthians*, 11.14.
26. Camilla Caporicci clearly demonstrates Berowne's abuse of Petrarchan language in her article for this volume.

27. The example of Shakespeare's Cleopatra and her "tawny front" making Antony "become the bellows and the fan /To cool a gipsy's lust" comes to mind ( *Antony and Cleopatra* , I.i.9-10).

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## ABSTRACTS

This paper aims at exploring the varied senses and shades of black in *Love's Labour's Lost* through its chromatic opposites embodied by white and fair. By taking into account the diverse conventional speeches on colours, shaped among other things by rhetoric, science, Petrarchism and treatises on the art of painting, this study of black and white throws light upon the ways the codification, or even the stylistics, of colours are more broadly challenged, and even dislocated by Shakespeare.

Cet article analyse le contraste entre le noir et le blanc qui structure les discours sur la beauté féminine dans *Love's Labour's Lost*. Influencé par les théories scientifiques, picturales, poétiques et par les couleurs flatteuses de la rhétorique, Shakespeare dissèque les codifications de la couleur ainsi que l'éloquence du noir et du blanc, de l'ombre et de la lumière afin de mettre à nu l'hypocrisie du langage poétique.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** blanc, couleur, noir, Peines d'amour perdues **Keywords:** black, colour, Love's Labour's Lost, white

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# “I smell false Latin, dunghill for unguem”: Odours and Aromas in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*

Christine Sukic

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The smell of a dramatic work is difficult to assess. A play is a text that may include olfactory metaphors, but being also a staged work, we may want to try and imagine what a play smelled like on stage. In an article on “The Smell of *Macbeth*”, Jonathan Gil Harris tried to imagine the smell (or the stench) of the Shakespearean stage. <sup>1</sup> Evoking the “thunder and lightning” of the stage directions and the technical construction of such an indication in *Macbeth* (1606) he explored the embodied reaction to the play for early modern playgoers and what sort of “archive of smell” it would have elicited then. Plays, presumably, had different smells. For thunder, squibs were commonly used, Harris tells us, and that type of firework produced a “pungent stink”, <sup>2</sup> an association that Cotgrave confirmed when he suggested “a little fart, or Squib”, to translate the French word *Petereau*. <sup>3</sup> According to our cultural model, *Macbeth* would thus have smelt bad, being steeped in the “smoke of hell” ( I .v.49) as well as the “smell of blood” ( v .i.42). Other plays are associated with different kinds of smells. In *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (1606), Vindice and Hippolito use perfume to trick the Duke into

kissing the skull of Vindice's dead lover Gloriana, while Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1610) immediately suggests the scatological with Subtle's attack on Face at the beginning of the play, "Thy worst. I fart at thee" ( I .i.2). The play's coprophilous interest is corroborated by the later episode of the "privy" ( III .v.78) where Dapper is locked up until well into act V, when he admits to having been "overcome" by "the fume" ( V .iv.5). The play is inundated by various smells, actual or metaphorical, so much so that Ben Jonson hoped that his dedicatee, Lady Mary Wroth, would find the odour of the play "acceptable" in his prefatory letter. <sup>4</sup>

Ben Jonson's olfactory construction in his play has another specificity, which is the context of "the sickness", that is to say, the plague, mentioned in "The Argument" of the play and in various direct and indirect references in the text itself, since it is an important part of the plot.

It is difficult to separate a history of early modern English theatre (especially in London) from a history of early modern disease and the context of the various plague epidemics at the turn of the century, since major outbreaks of the plague always meant a closing of the theatres in order to try and protect Londoners from the pestilence. In his book on "gallants", *The guls horne-booke*, it is interesting that Thomas Dekker, when describing the playhouses, should use such expressions as "a stinking breath of hisses" when he evokes the "Comick Theater", or "the Breath of the great Beast" <sup>5</sup> vanishing into thin air in the theatres. London was affected by the plague several times between 1570 and 1670. Ernest B. Gilman indicates frightening figures for London and its environs during that period: 225,000 deaths. In 1593, he reports, "more than 15,000 people died — one out of every eight Londoners, given a total estimated population of 123,000". <sup>6</sup> *Love's Labour's Lost* was written and

performed during that period. The plague, or pestilence, was thought to be caused by bad smells or “miasmas”. Contemporary plague writers, such as Thomas Dekker, made it clear. So did earlier narratives of the plague by Ovid or Boccaccio. Shakespeare himself uses references to pestilent air, such as when, in *Richard II*, Henry Bolingbroke asks of his son: “Can no man tell me of my unthrifty son? / 'Tis full three months since I did see him last. / If any plague hang over us, 'tis he” ( v .iii.1-3). Bearing these contexts in mind, I would like to address the question of the smell of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and wonder in what way the olfactory system of the play could inform us about its aesthetics. More specifically, I would like to look at the possibilities of inversion offered by olfactory metaphors and how they give us a clue concerning the reversibility of language.

From the strict point of view of stagecraft, the play does not appear to be particularly fragrant or smelly, since most stage props are letters or messages. The deer hunted by the princess in act IV is probably killed by a crossbow, as was the usage then, and therefore no odorous gunpowder would have been used. The play does not call for any specific smell and the props used are not likely to create any particular olfactory impression on the spectators, so that our sensory approach to the play depends almost solely on the metaphorical level of the text.

Smells are social constructions. Good and bad smells vary and our perception of them depends on several factors. What we may perceive as a stench can be sensed in a different way for another culture or may have been sensed differently in another time period, as Alain Corbin showed in his history of smell in modern France, *The Foul and the Fragrant* <sup>7</sup>. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, the sense of smell is part of a social and cultural construct according to which the upper and/or educated classes are supposed to give out sweet fragrances



while the lower and/or uneducated social classes are associated with bad odours. Armado suggests that rhetoric can be obscured by “sweet smoke” ( III .i.52), a phrase that points both to the dangers of an intricate and complex use of language and to its admirable plasticity, hence its decidedly fragrant smell. Speaking can thus be equated to giving out a “sigh” ( III .i.56), an image which is commonly found in Petrarchan rhetoric, as Ferdinand points out, albeit with a negative connotation, when he accuses Longaville and Dumaine of having read out love poetry: “[I] / Saw sighs reek from you” ( IV .iii.132).

For the pedants of the play, the smell of learning is fragrant and Holofernes associates Ovid’s *Naso* with the “flowers of fancy” found in Berowne’s letter: “Ovidio Naso was the man; and why indeed ‘Naso’, but for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention?” ( IV .ii.110-111). Ovid is supposed to be the epitome of poetic invention, but Holofernes, using Ovid’s Latin name *Naso*, gives him a nasal appendix sensitive enough to sniff out the flowers of fancy, thus giving language, and especially rhetoric (where those flowers are to be found), a material dimension (that of the nose) as well as a metaphorical one (the flowers of fancy are smells, the most elusive of sensations). In Holofernes’ mind, olfactory sensations serve to oppose the stench of ignorance to the sweet smell of learning. In the early modern period, certain smells were thought to induce memory, such as incense. In Thomas Tomkis’s *Lingua: or the Combat of the tongue and the five senses*, Olfactus describes how, through the use of incense, he can “strengthen memory” in order to “make mans spirits more apt for things divine”.

<sup>8</sup> However, incense was no longer used in English churches at the end of the sixteenth century, being associated with Roman Catholicism. Apart from this specific fragrance, the perception of

smell is, more generally, based on memory, as Holly Dugan has showed. <sup>9</sup> It is thus not surprising that the metaphor should be used in a remark that refers to one of the most popular sources of early modern literature.

The smell of the play, though, is made up of several elements and goes through several phases, changing according to the characters present on stage. When Costard enters in act III, scene i, the implication that the “sweet smoke” of rhetoric previously evoked by Armado is now turning into a bad smell, is established by the clown’s various misunderstandings and his inability to perceive the subtleties of language. When Armado asks Moth to give him “*l’envoy*” (60), he gives rise to a network of scatological images, first because Costard mishears the word “enigma” and understands “egma” instead (60-61), which he seems to take for some sort of enema or clyster-pipe. As William Carroll explains it in his footnotes to the Cambridge edition, the word “*l’envoy*” had already been associated with the scatological by Thomas Nashe in *Have With You in Saffron Walden* (1596) when mocking Gabriel Harvey’s pedantic use of the same word, referring to Harvey’s “excrementall conceipts” and “a third *Lenvoy*, like a fart after a good Stoole”. <sup>10</sup> In *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, the poetic term turns into a laxative for Costard, who is freed (and cured of constipation) by Armado: “and now you will be my purgation and let me loose” (110-111). But “purgation” also has a figurative meaning, that of a purification from sins or any kind of defilement, a word that is thus appropriate for Costard’s situation, that of having been caught in an “obscene and most preposterous event” (1.i. 230). Patricia Parker has written extensively on the word “preposterous” and its structural implications in several of Shakespeare’s plays. She explains that:

“Preposterous” comes from *posterus* (“after” or “behind”) and *prae* (“in front” or “before”) and connotes a reversal of “post” for “pre”, back for front, second for first, sequel for beginning. As contemporary definitions of the term make clear, it is hence available [...] for inversions that disrupt a “proper” or “natural” sequence. <sup>11</sup>

In this case, a man following a woman. As Patricia Parker notes, the term can also imply sexual practices condemned as “unnatural”, or “preposterous venery”, a phrase used, among others, by Thomas Heywood in *Gynaikeion* (1624), in the part entitled “De Laenis, or of Bawdes”. <sup>12</sup> The relation between the posterior and the scatological is further exploited in IV.ii. It is first suggested by Dull’s malapropism when he says that “the pollution holds in the exchange” (IV.ii.39), pollution having connotations of uncleanness, dirt and impurity. Of course, the most potent example is Holofernes’ sarcastic remark:

COSTARD. thou hadst it *ad dunghill*, at the fingers’ ends, as they say.  
HOLOFERNES. O, I smell false Latin: ‘dunghill’ for *unquem*.  
(v.i.63-4).

Holofernes’ remark is naturally intended for Nathanael and is meant to be lost on Costard himself. Thus, the smell of dung (equated to “false Latin”) is used as a cultural marker purposed to label Costard as a bad-smelling fool. The mistake also points to the reversibility of smells, as well as of language. The whole passage is studded with scatological references, as if the stench emitted by Costard invaded the scene. The conversation is immediately drawn towards the “posteriors” (v.i.72 and 74), under the influence of Armado, a word which is, according to Holofernes, “well culled” (75-76), with an obvious reference to the French *cul*. The smell becomes sharper, as Armado evokes the “royal finger thus dally[ing] with [his] excrement” (83-84).

Even if Costard and Dull are invariably (and sometimes unwittingly) drawn towards the lower parts of the body by the polysemic possibilities of language, the pedants of the play do not escape bad odours. Through a sense of inversion, the scatological further invades the play and its characters in its “posterior” part, in particular during the Pageant of the Nine Worthies that turns on itself to become an antimasque, thus inverting the intrinsic heroic meaning of the show. When Nathaniel plainly declares that he is “Alisander” (v.ii.554), he is betrayed by his body odour. Boyet thinks his nose “stands too right” (555) compared with the traditional descriptions of Alexander’s nasal appendix but, more to the point, Berowne clearly expresses the odoriferous impossibility of that statement through an antiphrasis: “Your nose smells ‘no’ in this, most tender-smelling knight” (556), since, according to Plutarch, Alexander’s sweat did not smell bad or, as Montaigne put it, “yeilded a sweet-smelling savour”.<sup>13</sup> Berowne’s assertion is confirmed by Costard, when he definitely sends Nathaniel to the privy by reinterpreting Alexander’s coat of arms. Instead of a lion on a throne, he sees that “Your lion, that holds his pole-axe sitting on a close-stool, will be given to Ajax” (565-566), the “close-stool” being a seat in a privy, and Ajax a clear reference to an early modern toilet, that had just been invented by Sir John Harington when Shakespeare wrote the play, and described in his *A new discourse of a stale subject, called the metamorphosis of Ajax* (1596), with the now-famous pun on “Ajax / a jakes”.

Holofernes is also a victim of that olfactory inversion based on language, as he announces that he represents Judas and is careful enough to signal the heroic dimension of his part (“Not Iscariot, sir. ‘Judas I am, yclept Maccabaeus’”, v.ii.583-584), yet language, a veritable Judas, betrays him when Dumaine and Berowne put

forward the posterior part of the word (“For the latter end of his name. / For the ‘ass’ to the Jude?”), 612-613).

As for Armado, the sweet breath of his heroism is definitely polluted in the same scene. He presents his Hector as being “breathed” (v.ii.636), that is to say, in good wind, in good condition, but Hector’s sweet breath soon turns to a foul smell: “The sweet war-man is dead and rotten” (644). This olfactory change is announced by the lords’ jocular reaction. By interrupting Armado, they turn his “gift” from Mars into a “gilt nutmeg” (629), a word that prompts a sequence of olfactory objects, followed by a series of sexual puns:

BEROWNE. A lemon.

LONGAVILLE. Stuck with cloves.

DUMAINE. No, cloven (630-632).

A gilt nutmeg was a nutmeg glazed with egg yolk and was, according to Donald Watts, “a common Christmas gift, and, encased in silver, they were worn at night as an inducement to sleep”.<sup>14</sup> As for the lemon stuck with cloves, it is a kind of pomander that was mainly used, at the time, to flavour and purify a kind of wine used against disease.<sup>15</sup>

*Love’s Labour’s Lost* is thus the seat of a first sensory phenomenon: the “sweet smoke” of pedantic knowledge gradually turning to a stench that tends to overwhelm the stage and inconvenience the other characters. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, we also find the same sense of inversion through Bottom’s misuse of language when Thisbe’s sweet breath turns to “flowers of odious savours” (III.i.70). In *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, olfactory metaphors seem to be used as claims for legitimacy: legitimacy of knowledge, social legitimacy against the illegitimacy of illiteracy and the lower social classes.

In trying to define an olfactory system in the play, we could say that there is another type of smell that is vying with the stench of the

social other. That smell is part of an attempt at establishing the presence of a scent, a fragrance even, that would be socially and aesthetically acceptable, but that also undergoes a process of inversion. The text of the play uses the word “sweet” about 75 times, not always in the sense of “fragrant” though. In the early modern period, “sweet” had several meanings but one of the dominant ones was a positive type of smell. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the second meaning is “fragrant” or “scented”; the third is “free from offensive or disagreeable taste or smell” or “in sound and wholesome condition”. The sweetness of the play must be related to its debt to love poetry and in particular the Petrarchan style of rhetoric that is often used (most of the time in jest). There is a distinct smell of “sweetness” in the play that could be overwhelming to the point of cloyingness; as to its “wholesome” quality, it also has to be qualified. The ladies have “sweet breaths” (v.ii.167) that are able to “puff out” the Muscovites as if they were tapers. This is, by the way, one of the *topoi* deliberately misused by Shakespeare in Sonnet 130 when he writes that, “in some perfumes is there more delight / Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks”. Ferdinand’s breath is “royal sweet” (v.ii.517), in Armado’s words, while Armado’s soul is “sweet” (III.i.107) and tongues can speak “sweetly” (III.i.144), as if speech and breath were equivalent, by an effect of synaesthesia. Boyet also uses the image about the young men in a jocular way when he says that they will “Blow like sweet roses in the summer air” (v.ii.293).

The rhetoric of Petrarchan poetry abounds in love sighs and sweet breaths. The sigh is one of the most frequent motifs of love poetry and one that is as evanescent as a smell. Breath and smell were related for early modern anatomists because it was only through breathing that invisible particles of odours could “touch” the brain.

<sup>16</sup> In the play, Cupid is, as Berowne calls him, “Th’anointed sovereign of sighs and groans” ( III .i.159) and makes him “sigh for her” (177). The sigh is an expression of love, tainted with melancholy. Hence Armado’s use of them, even if, at first, he “think[s] scorn to sigh” ( I .ii.53), because he is not sure it is in keeping with his status as a great soldier, yet he does not hesitate to sigh at Moth when he is pleased with him: “By thy favour, sweet welkin, I must sigh in thy face” ( III .i.56). Sighs are also frequently used as a metaphor of language in love poetry: Samuel Daniel uses the image in the first sonnet to Delia, writing “Heere have I summ’d my sighes” in the first sonnet (l. 7-8), <sup>17</sup> and Berowne draws on the same type of imagery when he says “I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue, groan” ( III .i.181). In such type of rhetoric, language seems to lose its materiality: the written word of love poetry is first and foremost a spoken word, and even a sigh with no substance, which is in keeping with the sonneteers’ frequent assertion of speechlessness as they try to express their impossible love.

Sighs are usually a counterpoint to “sweet breath”, but breath can also be a part of the language of love, as spoken by the lover who is then “out of breath” if he loses his capacity for speech. In *Parthenophil and Parthenophe*, the speaker of Barnabe Barnes’s sonnets laments that he should “Wast breathlesse wordes, and breathfull sighes increase” (sonnet XVIII ) <sup>18</sup>. Longaville, in his sonnet of act IV, scene 3, uses the same image but adds the idea of an exchange of breaths when he says that “Vows are but breath, and breath a vapour is / Then thou, fair sun, which on my earth dost shine, / Exhal’st this vapour-vow, in thee it is” (60-63).

We could say that conversation in the play is based on an exchange of breath (the Princess uses the phrase “the converse of breath”, v.ii.709), but not so much of “vapour-vow[s]”. Conversation does not

produce sweet-smelling air, but sourness that could possibly induce the spreading of diseases. Montaigne, in his essay on smells and odours, points to the possibility of getting sick through conversation:

...yet am I little subject to those popular diseases, that are taken by conversation, and bred by the contagion of the ayre: And I have escaped those of my time, of which there hath been many and severall kinds, both in the Townes about me, and in our Armie. 19

Thus is Navarre “infected” (II.i.226). Love, like the plague, can be caught through the sense of smell, as Moth describes it in a jocular way: “sometime through the nose as if you snuffed up love by smelling love” (III.i.11-2). Interestingly, there are several references to the plague in the play, or to love as a disease that infects, which is another *topos* of Petrarchan poetry: to love is to be sick, or to have a fever, as when Berowne talks of love as a “plague” (“It is a plague / That Cupid will impose for my neglect / Of his almighty dreadful little might”, III.i.178-80). In the same vein, Barnabe Barnes devotes one sonnet to love sickness in his sonnet sequence:

Then did I sweate, and swelt, mine eyes daze  
Till that a burning fever had opprest me:  
Which made me faint, no Phisicke hath represt me.  
For I trye all, yet for to make me sound  
Ay me! no grasse, nor Phisicke may be found. 20

In Dumaine’s sonnet of act IV, scene 3, love is also a sickness caught through the air (the lover is “sick to death”, 99) even though the air is defined as a pleasant one, under the influence of a “blossom” (95). The wind, because it can breathe and thus may find a passage towards the lover, is characterised by its wholesomeness:

[...] the lover, sick to death,  
Wished himself the heaven’s breath.  
“Air”, quoth he, “thy cheeks may blow;  
Air, would I might triumph so!”



(iv.iii.99-102)

The play also contains several references to death before Marcadé's entrance, some indirect, or even hypothetical, such as the allusion to Katherine's dead sister at v.ii.13, who had a "heavy" (14) and not a "light" (15) heart like her sister's. The possibility of the air being marred by the smell of snuff also hovers over this passage when Katherine tells Rosaline that she may "mar the light by taking it in snuff" (22). Finally, there is at least one whole passage devoted to the plague, when Berowne admits to Rosaline that he is "sick" (v.ii.417), as well as the other three who are also "infected" (420), so much so that the words "Lord have mercy on us" (419) could be written all over them, as they were on the doors of plague houses at the time. Berowne makes it clear by saying that "They have the plague" (421) and by using a pun on "tokens" (423), a word that refers both to the love tokens given by the lords to the women, as well as to the "plague spots", the signs of the plague. The word "token" was frequently used in a medical context in the sense of "symptom". For instance, in *A defensative against the plague* (1593), in the chapter entitled "Evill signes", Simon Kellwaye writes:

When the botch waxeth so hard that by no meanes it will come to suppuration, but resisteth whatsoever is done unto it for the farthering thereof, and so returneth in againe into the inwarde partes soddenly, is a token of soddaine death at hand, and so is it if either before or after it is broken it looke of a blewish colour, or of divers colours like the raynbow round about it. <sup>21</sup>

The double meaning of the word is thus fairly established: a token is a sign that is part of a semiotics of disease. <sup>22</sup> Interestingly, in the dialogue between Rosaline and Berowne, the infection or visitation is caught not through the sense of smell (which was thought to be the most conducive of the disease) but through that of sight: "They have the plague, and caught it of your eyes" (v.ii.421). There is a form of

correspondence between an early modern discourse on the plague, in which the disease was caught through the air and then became a visible sign on the skin, and the language of love, in which the “token” is an attempt at giving it substantiality and visibility. It points to the necessity to “see” love and give it visible signs, which is all the more necessary in the play as the only “banquet” the young men have access to (through their oath) is that of the mind and not of the body (I.i.24-25).

The use of the sense of smell is not surprising in a play that is based on insubstantiality: that of the plot, which is thin as thin air, and that of love, which is lacking in clear definition. It is there, and not there, absent and present as sonneteers would say. <sup>23</sup>

The sense of smell is based on that evanescence, and the idea of the ephemeral. It does not last but remains as an olfactory memory. It is difficult to word, and calls for metaphors, as Holly Dugan points out in her book *The Ephemeral History of Perfume*: “Metaphor is the apparatus through which invisible smells are ‘made to appear’”. <sup>24</sup> Dogberry, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, unwittingly confirms this literary dimension of the smell with his malapropism: “Comparisons are odorous” (III.v.16). <sup>25</sup> Interestingly, in his essay on odours and smells, when Montaigne tries to define the ideal smell of a woman, he ends up defining it as an absence, while the presence of smell is suspicious—an idea that is frequent in the early modern period:

The most exquisit and sweetest savour of a woman, it is to smell of nothing; and sweet, well-smelling, strange savours, may rightly be held suspicious in such as use them; and a man may lawfully thinke, that who useth them, doth-it to cover some naturall defect: whence proceede these ancient Poeticall sayings.

To smell sweet, is to stinke. <sup>26</sup>

Smells tend towards nothingness, and it is their very ephemeral quality that makes them popular in poetry to define what cannot be

represented, what cannot be defined. Montaigne goes as far as saying that, as a young man, he kept on his moustache the olfactory memory of “The close-smacking, sweetnesse-moving, love-alluring, and greedismirking kisses of youth”.<sup>27</sup> As an example of an olfactory metaphor that represents what cannot be represented, Shakespeare uses the image of the distillation of perfume in Sonnet 5 in order to define the beauty of the male addressee:

Then were not summer's distillation left  
A liquid pris'ner pent in walls of glass,  
Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,  
Nor it nor no remembrance what it was.  
But flow'rs distilled, though they with winter meet,  
Leese but their show, their substance still lives sweet. (9-14)

To quote Michael Clody, the olfactory image constitutes a shift from the visual and helps define beauty as “unreachable”.<sup>28</sup> However, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, olfactory references or images do not only serve to express the inexpressible, but are also used in an attempt to give substance, to give materiality to language. This is the case in Petrarchan poetry, in which images of the plague are meant to counterbalance the sweetness of the nosegay, as we may call it. Samuel Daniel evokes the perfume of Delia's breath in sonnet XVIII. Delia should give up all her attributes, among them her particular odour (“T'Arabian odors give thy breathing sweete”, 6), so that the speaker may lose his sickness, in the last line of the sonnet: “So shalt thou cease to plague, and I to paine” (14).<sup>29</sup> So in this case, the poet equates the “breathing sweete” and the “plague”. This idea of a correspondence between good and bad odours could be read as a Neo-Platonic motif but it also offers aesthetic possibilities on the question of representation. Giordano Bruno, in his satirical “Argument” to the *Heroic Frenzies*, describes women's beauty as a

series of metonymies, one of which being “that stink”, and concludes that it “deceives us as a species of beauty”. <sup>30</sup>

Shakespeare is part of this aesthetic attempt at giving substance to the insubstantial and at exploring the ephemeral. The olfactory is the perfect image of that absent representation: it is very difficult to define. Hence its presence in early modern sonnets, in which language loses its substance to the point of silence. In *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, the sweetness of the air breathed by the young men and women, combined with the stench of the plague and the scatological references, reflects the intermediary status of the sense of smell—between the “noble” senses of hearing and sight, and the basest ones of touch and taste <sup>31</sup>—and its dual literary status as a metaphor, both elusive and full of substance. Finally, the play stands in an intermediate state, between the bad odours of public theatres, and the more refined aromas (to early modern noses) of the private theatres or even court performances, attested by its stage history.

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## NOTES

1. Jonathan Gil Harris, “The Smell of *Macbeth*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 4, Winter 2007, p. 465-486.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 485.
3. Randle Cotgrave, *A dictionarie of the French and English tongues*, London, Printed by Adam Islip, 1611, n.p.
4. “If what I offer bear an acceptable odour...”, Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, ed. F. H. Mares, London, Methuen, 1971.
5. Thomas Dekker, *The guls horne-booke*, London, 1609, p. 2 and 28. Accessed via EEBO.

6. Ernest B. Gilman, *Plague Writing in Early Modern England* , Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2009, p. 129-130.
7. Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant. Odour and the French Social Imagination*, transl. Miriam Kochan, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1986.
8. Thomas Tomkis, *Lingua: Or the Combat of the Tongue, and the Five Senses for Superiority* , London, 1607, sig. H4<sup>r</sup> , quoted by Jonathan Gil Harris, *op.cit.* , p. 481.
9. Holly Dugan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume. Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* , Baltimore, the Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011.
10. William C. Carroll, *op. cit.* , p. 96.
11. Patricia Parker, “Preposterous Events”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* , vol. 43, no. 2, Summer 1992, p. 186-213, here p. 193.
12. Thomas Heywood, *Gynaikeion: or, Nine bookes of various history. Concerning women inscribed by ye names of ye nine Muses* , London, 1624, p. 343. Accessed via EEBO.
13. Montaigne, “Of smels and odours”, *Essays* , transl. John Florio, 1613 edition, p. 171, accessed via EEBO.
14. Donald Watts, *Elsevier’s Dictionary of Plant Lore* , Oxford, Academic, 2007, p. 268.
15. See for instance Thomas Lupton who, in *A thousand notable things, of sundry sortes Wherof some are wonderfull, some straunge, some pleasant, divers necessary, a great sort profitable and many very precious* (London, 1579) explains that “Wine wyll be pleasant in taste and in savour, and cullour: it wyll much please thee if an Orenge, or a Lymon (stickt round about with Cloaves) be hanged within the vessell that it touche not the Wyne. And so the Wyne wyll be preserved from foystines and evyll savor”, p. 37. Accessed via EEBO.
16. See Holly Dugan, *op. cit.* , p. 106.
17. Samuel Daniel, *Delia and Rosamond Augmented. Cleopatra* , London, 1594, sonnet 1.
18. Barnabe Barnes, *Parthenophil and Parthenophe Sonnettes, madrigals, elegies and odes* , London, J. Wolfe, 1593, p. 14. Accessed via EEBO.
19. Montaigne, *Essays* , *op. cit.* , p. 172.
20. Barnes, Sonnet XXII, *op. cit.* , p. 16.
21. Simon Kellwaye, *A defensative against the plague contayning two partes or treatises*, London, 1593, p. 16. Accessed via EEBO.
22. On this, see Nichole DeWall, “‘Sweet recreation barred’: The Case for Playgoing in Plague-Time”, in Rebecca Totaro and Ernest B. Gilman, eds, *Representing the Plague in Early Modern England* , New York and London, Routledge, 2011, p. 133-149, here p. 146. Ernest B. Gilman also gives a very good analysis of this passage in *Plague Writing in Early Modern England* , talking about a conceit that “bespeaks the plague only to suppress, and even mock, its terrifying reality by turning it into the figure of an amatory dalliance” ( *op. cit.* , p. 53). He also relates this passage to the penance imposed by Rosaline at the end of the play when Berowne has to spend a year visiting the “speechless sick” ( *ibid.* ).

23. Philip Sidney uses this oxymoron in his sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella* , as in sonnet 60 about Stella, “Whose presence absence, absence presence is” (l. 13).
24. Holly Dugan, *op. cit.* , p. 4.
25. I would like to thank William C. Carroll and Henry Woodhuysen for drawing my attention to the relevance of this line.
26. Montaigne, *op. cit.* , p. 172.
27. *Ibid.* .
28. Michael Clody, “Shakespeare’s ‘alien pen’: Self-Substantial Poetics in the Young Man Sonnets”, *Criticism* , Summer 2008, vol. 50, no. 3, p. 471-499, here p. 485.
29. Samuel Daniel, *op. cit.* , sonnet 19.
30. Giordano Bruno, *The Heroic Frenzies* , transl. Paul Eugene Memmo, Jr., Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1966, p. 60.
31. See Paulette Choné, “Bellange ou le parfum de la *maniera* ”, in Didier Souiller, ed., *Maniérisme et littérature* , Paris, Orizons, 2013, p. 81-91, here p. 85.
32. On the different smells attached to the public and the private theatres, see especially Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London* , Cambridge, CUP, 1996, p. 38-40.
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## ABSTRACTS

The “smell” of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* could be assessed through its original staging and the context of early modern playhouses, but its olfactory content is mainly metaphorical. The pedants of the play try to impose the sweet smell of knowledge as a social marker that they oppose to the stench of ignorance characterising the lower social classes. The play is also studded with fragrant metaphors that can be traced back to the Petrarchan tradition. However, in both cases, the smells undergo a process of reversibility and the play is often steeped in scatological metaphors as well as images of pestilent air—probably reflecting the context of the plague in early modern London. More importantly, the olfactory metaphors inform us on the aesthetics of the play and give us a clue about the reversibility of language.

On pourrait tenter de déterminer l’« odeur » de *Love’s Labour’s Lost* en pensant à sa mise en scène à l’époque de Shakespeare dans un théâtre londonien, mais en fait, son contenu olfactif est essentiellement métaphorique : les pédants de la pièce tentent d’imposer l’idée d’un savoir à l’odeur agréable dont ils font un marqueur social opposé à la puanteur de l’ignorance représentée par les personnages de classes sociales inférieures ; la pièce est

également envahie de métaphores odorantes qui rappellent la tradition pétrarquiste. Cependant, dans les deux cas, Shakespeare fait subir à ces odeurs un processus de réversibilité : la pièce est souvent dominée par des métaphores scatologiques ou des images d'air pestilentiel—sans doute un rappel du contexte des épidémies de peste dans le Londres de la première modernité. Enfin, les métaphores olfactives sont un indice de l'esthétique de la pièce et nous éclairent sur la question de la réversibilité du langage.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** esthétique, odorat, Peines d'amour perdues, peste, pétrarquisme **Keywords:** aesthetics, Love's Labour's Lost, Petrarchism, plague, smell

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# Jeu et jeu de mots

*Jesting*

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# Players, Cheats, and Games of Wit in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*

Louise Fang

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Many critics such as Louis A. Montrose,<sup>1</sup> Katherine R. Larson,<sup>2</sup> or Donatella Baldini<sup>3</sup> have underlined the essential part played by games in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*. This is of course especially true of wordplay which turns the entire play into a "civil war of wits" (II.i.222<sup>4</sup>) to quote the Princess of France. In this paper I shall study to what extent early modern concepts of playing, and especially word-playing, influence the dynamics of *Love's Labour's Lost*; and how, in turn, *Love's Labour's Lost* plays with the courtly rules of early modern games. My argument is that the expected match of "fair tongue[s]" (II.i.72) between the two courts is repeatedly turned into what would then have been considered to be "foul play". This paves the way for a satire of courtly fashionable games and for a deeper exploration of the true motive of playing and its relation to time. First, I shall see how early modern conduct books and rhetoric handbooks construed the art of conversation itself as a game and to what extent this is both mirrored and satirized in *Love's Labour's Lost*. In the light of these early modern conceptions of witty wordplay, I will then see that the characters of *Love's Labour's Lost* use games in

order to cheat or to indulge in forms of “foul play” which highlight the underlying violence of such games. Indeed, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* may be read as a satire of courtly modes of play that delves deeper into the true escapist purpose of play: through their games, the characters of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* try to mask the passing of the time, but their ludic quest is vain as shown by Marcadé’s abrupt announcement of the death of the king of France.

## “A set of wit well played”: conversation as game in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*

In *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Shakespeare takes up several metaphors that liken witty conversations to games. These were in fact manifold in conduct books and rhetoric manuals of the time. Indeed, games of wit were often compared to archery for example, a metaphor we find on numerous occasions throughout the play: Boyet describes the ladies’ “conceits” as being “fleeter than arrows” (V.ii.260-261). Comparisons such as this one were aimed at underlining the speed of the players and, hereby, to emphasise the sharpness of their wit. According to Baldassare Castiglione in Thomas Hoby’s 1561 translation of *The Book of the Courtier*, for instance: a “quippie ought to be shott out and hit the pricke beefore a man can descerne that he that speaketh it can thinke upon it, elles it is colde and litle woorth”.

<sup>5</sup> The metaphor of archery brings out the competition at stake in conversational games, something that we also find through the fencing metaphors that pervade *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. <sup>6</sup> These games were, as shown by John Turner in *Shakespeare: Out of Court*, <sup>7</sup> of great political importance for courtiers who vied against each other for honour and prestige or “praise” as the Princess terms it in the hunting scene of IV.i: “As I for praise alone now seek to spill/ The

poor deer's blood that my heart means no ill" (IV.i.34-35). The agonistic dimension of these games was certainly very palpable. Courtiers strove to win the game of conversation just as Holofernes comically tries to prove his superior knowledge through the figure of accumulation in IV.ii: "The deer was, as you know, *sanguis*, in blood, ripe as the pomewater, who now hangeth like a jewel in the ear of *caelum*, the sky, the welkin, the heaven, and anon falleth like a crab on the face of *terra*, the soil, the land, the earth" (IV.ii.3-6). This figure of accumulation had actually been criticised by George Puttenham in *The Art of English Poesy* (1589) as an awkward attempt to win the game of conversation: "Art and good policy moves us many times to be earnest in our speech, and then we lay on such load and so go to it by heaps as if we would win the game by multitude of words and speeches." <sup>8</sup>

Tennis was also used as a metaphor to illustrate the ideal courtly game of wits. In fact, both George Puttenham and Stefano Guazzo allude to tennis. Puttenham describes the antanaclasis – the figure that structures the "set of wit" (V.ii.29) between Rosaline and Katherine in V.ii – as a form of verbal tennis in *The Art of English Poesy* (1589): "Ye have another figure which by his nature we may call the Rebound, alluding to the tennis ball which, being smitten with the racket, rebounds back again, and where the last figure before played with two words somewhat like, this playeth with one word written all alike but carrying divers senses." <sup>9</sup> This comparison is extended to conversation itself in Stefano Guazzo's *The Civil Conversation* (which was translated into English in 1581): "to couet to speak always, and never to hear others, is a Kind of Tyranny, so that in Talk the Speaker and the Hearer ought to agree to keep Turns as it were, as they do at tennis." <sup>10</sup> In both cases, tennis illustrates not only the swiftness of wit of both players but

also the reciprocity of the exchange. Indeed, according to B. Castiglione, the ideal courtier had “to be nimble and quicke at the play at tenise”.<sup>11</sup> Incidentally the adjective “nimble” was also often used in the phrase “a nimble tongue” to describe witty jesting as shown by the Princess of France’s line in V.ii: “A heavy heart bears not a nimble tongue”(V.ii.711). Both players must be of comparable strength to give rise to a harmonious game of wits. In this regard, we could contrast Rosaline and Katherine’s dialogue in V.ii with that between the Princess and the Forester at the beginning of IV.i, which is cut short by the latter’s inability to respond to the Princess’s wit. Conversely, in Rosaline and Katherine’s “set of wit” (V.ii.29),<sup>12</sup> stichomythia (V.ii.14-29) underlines the aptitude of both players and the repeated use of antanaclasis around the word ‘light’ suggests the image of a tennis ball rebounding from one side of the court to the other.

Although, as we have seen, all these metaphors can be found in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, they are implicitly mocked or turned upside down. Indeed, characters that draw these comparisons – the Princess of France, Boyet, Armado (who often resorts to fencing metaphors) – mean to emphasise the courtly aspect of their conversation. However, Boyet, for instance, turns the archery metaphor into a bawdy quibble in IV.i.102-132, so much so that the comparison shifts from archery to bowls with Costard’s cue:

MARIA. Come, come, you talk greasily, your lips grow foul.  
COSTARD. She’s too hard for you at prick, sir. Challenge her to bowl.  
BOYET. I fear too much rubbing. Good night, my good owl.  
IV.i.130-132

The game of bowls was much less praised by writers of the time – and lends itself to bawdy puns in the play. In fact, in 1541 Henry VIII had issued a proclamation forbidding games such as bowls or dice

(except at Christmas) in order to encourage the practice of archery.

<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the Princess's praise of the tennis match of wits between her ladies is eventually contradicted by Rosaline's thinly veiled insult when she mentions smallpox, which turns the playful banter into a violent verbal duel superseding the more ludic aspect of the previous exchange:

ROSALINE. 'Ware pencils, ho! Let me not die your debtor,

My red dominical, my golden letter.

O, that your face were not so full of O's!

PRINCESS. A pox of that jest, and I beshrew all shrows.

V.ii.43-46

On these occasions, the courtiers' inability to play within the rules of courtly conversational games leads them to a stalemate. It is as though the play drew our attention to the game itself as much as to its limits and risks. Shakespeare implicitly parodies the courtly games of wit and the art of "civil conversation". Furthermore, he often overturns the usual metaphors likening courtly conversation to aristocratic pastimes by comparing them to more popular and less refined games such as bowls (as has just been mentioned) or even dice as in I.ii when Moth plays with the words "three years" as he would with dice (I.ii.42-45), and in V.ii.230-237 when Berowne and the Princess throw two "treys" of words ("treys" = a throw at dice). Dice were heavily condemned by most writers of the time, including Thomas Elyot, as an invention of the devil, <sup>14</sup> although several texts suggest they were also an important part of the life at court. In the *Book of the Courtier* for instance, dice are listed amongst the ordinary occupations of a gentleman as long as he played "not wholye for monies sake, nor fume and chafe in his losse." <sup>15</sup>

## Gamesters and Cheats in *Love's Labour's Lost*

Far from respecting the rules of the games they play, the characters of *Love's Labour's Lost* are often shown as cozeners or “gamesters” whose wit is essentially used as a means to cheat authority. The two courts accuse each other of cheating several times in the play. The court of Navarre, for instance, is repeatedly shown as a court of inveterate “gamesters” and cheaters. On several occasions, the men of Navarre’s court seem particularly inclined to dicing. Armado is described by Moth as a “gentleman and a gamester” in I.ii.42 and we might also suppose that he lost his shirt at dice as Spaniards were often described as very eager players. Castiglione for instance described them as particularly keen on jests and games like chess in the *Book of the Courtier* . <sup>16</sup> Berowne himself places a bet on the ensuing actions as early as I.i: “I’ll lay my head to any good man’s hat/These oaths will prove an idle scorn.” (I.i.296-297). <sup>17</sup> He also uses the image of dice games later in the play to answer the Princess’s jest in V.ii:

BEROWNE. White-handed mistress, one sweet word with thee.

PRINCESS. Honey, and milk, and sugar: there is three

BEROWNE. Nay then, two treys, an if you grow so nice,

Methlegin, wort, and malmsey. Well run, dice!

There’s half a dozen sweets.

PRINCESS. Seventh sweet, adieu.

Since you can cog, I’ll play no more with you.

V.ii.230-235

Berowne tries to change the game of wit into a game of chance in which it is easier to cheat his opponent. The Princess refuses such a game and accuses him of cheating or “cogging” although she, herself, is cheating as she speaks, since she is disguised as Rosaline, unbeknownst to Berowne. Indeed, the court of France often resorts to cheating as well. The Princess explicitly voices her deceitful intentions before the arrival of the Muscovites: “And change your favours too, so shall your loves/ Woo contrary, deceived by these

removes” (V.ii.134-135). When Navarre and his men realise the ladies of the court of France have fooled them, they immediately accuse them of not respecting the rules of the game of courtship they were trying to lead. Berowne denounces the trick the Princess and her court have played on them: “I see the trick on’t. Here was a consent,  
/ Knowing aforehand of our merriment,/ To dash it like a Christmas comedy” (V.ii.460-462).<sup>18</sup> The men’s accusations are also directed at Boyet who has “[forestalled their] sport”, as Berowne terms it, by warning the Princess of their impending arrival disguised as Muscovites (V.ii.472-473).

In fact, Navarre, Berowne, Longaville and Dumaine are shown as cheaters from the very beginning of the play. As early as I.i they realize they have to act against the oaths they have just sworn when the Princess of France arrives into the kingdom of Navarre. The king therefore declares, “We must of force dispense with this decree.” (I.i.145). In doing so, he invalidates the law almost as soon as he has proclaimed it, something which makes his last cue in I.i (“And go we, lords, to put in practice that/ Which each to other hath so strongly sworn.”, I.i.278-279) particularly ironic. In fact, the revelation of the four characters’ cheating in quick succession in IV.iii is one of the most comical scenes of the play where they come to realise they have all betrayed one another. They are all caught in the act, or “taken napping” as Longaville puts it (IV.iii.122), before realizing they are all “even” (IV.iii.209). Berowne himself acknowledges that they have all “played foul play with [their] oaths” at the end of the play (V.ii.729-730). Indeed, in IV.iii Berowne manages to devise “Some tricks, some quilllets, [...] to cheat the devil” (IV.iii.279) as Longaville terms it<sup>19</sup> and to argue that their initial oaths were actually worthless. Berowne even concludes his argument by saying: “It is religion to be thus forsworn” (IV.iii.332). Moreover, the trick

the Princess has played on them during the masque of the Muscovites has made the men of Navarre lie unwittingly once more since they have sworn their loves to the wrong women – so much so that by the end of the play Navarre and his men have actually betrayed their own oaths, not once but twice: “Peace, peace, forbear! / Your oath once broke, you force not to forswear” (V.ii.439-440). Later in V.ii Berowne cheats with words again during his dialogue with Rosaline when he interrupts her:

BEROWNE. [...] Your capacity,  
Is of that nature that to your huge store  
Wise things seem foolish and rich things but poor.  
ROSALINE. This proves you wise and rich: for in my eye –  
BEROWNE. I am a fool, and full of poverty.  
V.ii.376-380

In this passage, Berowne steals Rosaline’s witty jest in order to make it his own which prompts the latter’s immediate reaction: “It were a fault to snatch words from my tongue” (V.ii.382).

Cheating holds an essential place in the scenes of the subplot as well – especially those involving Costard and Moth. From the outset, Costard uses his wit to “play fast and loose” with the law. Indeed, Costard’s playful use of the synonyms of ‘wench’ has no other purpose but to escape Navarre’s sentence in I.i for instance:

KING. It was proclaimed a year’s imprisonment to be taken with a wench.  
COSTARD. I was taken with none, sir, I was taken with a damsel.  
KING. Well, it was proclaimed ‘damsel’.  
COSTARD. This was no damsel neither, sir, she was a virgin.  
KING. It is so varied too, for it was proclaimed ‘virgin’.  
COSTARD. If it were, I deny her virginity. I was taken with a maid.  
KING. This ‘maid’ will not serve your turn, sir.  
COSTARD. This maid will serve my turn, sir.  
I.i.264-272

By transforming his ‘wench’ into a ‘damsel’, a ‘virgin’, and finally a ‘maid’ he forces Navarre to change his proclamation at least twice



before he is able to arrest him. Although Costard's wordplay is ultimately unsuccessful, this passage highlights the incompatibility between wordplay and the legal use of language Navarre seeks to impose on his kingdom. In fact, in this scene, Navarre's rhetorical stiffness strongly contrasts with Costard's own linguistic resourcefulness (despite his occasional malapropisms). To assert his legal authority, Navarre has no other choice but to try to impose silence at the beginning of Costard's trial (in vain), or, in the end, to resort to force:

COSTARD .It may be so; but if he says it is so, he is, in telling true, but so.

KING. Peace!

COSTARD. Be to me and every man that dares not fight.

KING. No Words!

COSTARD. Of other men's secrets, I beseech you.

I.i.215-220

Throughout the scene, the King has been unable to voice a proclamation that would unambiguously condemn Costard. In the case of Moth, games of wit could also be construed as a form of cheating as they are essentially a way to evade his master's authority by mocking him repeatedly through witty wordplay. These are all the more efficient as Armado is unable to grasp them, let alone imitate them as we can see in I.ii when Moth even helps his master cheat his way out of his own oath to the king of Navarre through wordplay, as he interprets the phrase "to study three years" as though it meant Armado had to analyse the expression "three years" in I.ii:

MOTH. Why, sir, is this such a piece of study? Now here is three studied ere ye'll thrice wink; and how easy it is to put 'years' to the word 'three', and study 'three years' in two words, the dancing horse will tell you.

I.ii.42-45

Thus, an important part of the comedy lies in the fact that witty wordplay is used to evade the law or to mock authority.

## A Satire of Courtly Games

This paves the way for a satire of the sophisticated courtly games coming from Italy or France whose underlying violence is brought to the fore throughout the play. According to John Turner, the threat of violence was inherent in courtly games of conversation and is reflected throughout the play.<sup>20</sup> Indeed through several occurrences of “foul play”, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* draws our attention to the darker side of games. According to the *OED*, “foul play” referred to any “unfair conduct in a game [...] often with the additional notion of roughness or violence”.<sup>21</sup> In other words, “foul play” contradicted the very purpose of conversational games which was to give rise to a distinguished form of sociability. Indeed, Castiglione’s rules of conduct linked to jesting state the following:

The scope and measure to make men laughe in tauntinge must also be diligently considered: who he is that is taunted, for it provoketh no laughter to mocke and skorne a seelye soule in miserie and calamitie, nor yet a naughtie knave and common ribaulde, bicause a man would thinke that these men deserved to be otherwise punished, then in jeastinge at.<sup>22</sup>

The jests and continual interruptions of the men of Navarre during the pageant of the Nine Worthies may therefore be construed as a form of “foul play”. When they deliberately ridicule the pageant, Navarre and his men break one of the elementary rules of the courtier’s game according to which a gentleman should not play against a significantly weaker player or one of a markedly lower social class. The Princess and ladies of France enjoy this form of entertainment as well as according to the Princess: “That sport that best pleases that doth least know how”(V.ii.511). They also break

this rule of conduct when they repeatedly state their intention to humiliate the court of Navarre thanks to their wit. The Princess's conception of the ultimate purpose of playing, namely "mock for mock", <sup>23</sup> is in fact the very opposite of the ideal of courtly play propounded in such works as Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* in which the author states that: "the Courtier must be circumspect that he appeere not malitious and venimous and speake tauntes and quippies only for spite and to touch the quick [...]." <sup>24</sup> Therefore, the Princess' principle of ludic retaliation and her will to ridicule Navarre and his court, even to "shame" them ("So shall we stay, mocking intended game,/And they, well mocked, depart away with shame.", V.ii.155-156), stands in sharp contrast to the ideal of play found in such courtesy books. Berowne's comment at the end of the Muscovite scene, "By heaven, all dry-beaten with pure scoff!" (V.ii.263) also highlights the shift from witty jesting to complete humiliation through "scoff".

Moreover, the play strongly opposes these courtly games that came from Italy, France or Spain to simpler children's games. The allusions to children's games are numerous throughout the play, and especially in IV.iii:

BEROWNE. All hid, all hid, an old infant play  
Like a demigod here sit I in the sky,  
And wretched fools' secrets heedfully o'er-eye.  
More sacks to the mill! O heavens, I have my wish!  
Dumaine transformed! Four woodcocks in a dish!  
IV.iii.70-74

Here, Berowne first compares the unfolding scene to a game of hide-and-seek ("All hid, all hid,") and to the game of "More sacks to the mill", which, according to Paul G. Brewster was a game where "boys were accustomed to torture an unfortunate victim by throwing him on the ground and falling atop him, yelling out the formula, "Bags to

[on] the mill". This summon called up other lads, who then added their weight." <sup>25</sup> Navarre and his court are much more apt to play at children's games such as hide-and-seek, bags to the mill or push-pin ("And Nestor play at push-pin with the boys," IV.iii.161). <sup>26</sup> This is all the more ironic as Holofernes insists on the courtly nature games of the court of Navarre in the preceding scene: "Away, the gentles are at their game, and we will to our recreation." (IV.ii.145). Incidentally, one of the wittiest and most playful characters of *Love's Labour's Lost*, Moth, is himself just a boy which is why the schoolmaster Holofernes tells him to go "whip [his] gig" (V.i.55) when, in fact, he has been thoroughly ridiculed by the child's witty wordplay in V.i. These childish modes of play stand in sharp contrast to the more sophisticated games of tennis or fencing which were distinctively aristocratic and which were often imported from France, Spain or Italy. <sup>27</sup> In this regard, the satire of games is particularly perceptible through Armado. Indeed, Armado's pedantry is mocked through the technical fencing metaphors that keep cropping up in his cues in I.ii.143-146 or in V.i.49-51 for instance. Throughout the play, children's games therefore act as foil to more courtly games in order to highlight the excessive sophistication of the latter, their natural and childish roughness highly contrasting with the more threatening underlying violence of courtly contests for prestige and "praise".

## End game: Time and games in *Love's Labour's Lost*

Through its shrewd "anatomy of the modes of playing", <sup>28</sup> *Love's Labour's Lost* also raises the question of the very purpose of play through the relation of games and the passing of time. Throughout

the play, games seem to follow a circular pattern highlighted by the Princess's cue of V.ii "There's no such sport as sport by sport o'erthrown" (V.ii.152). The repetition of the word "sport" underlines the vicious circle in which the players are trapped. Similarly, the Princess's earlier cue "mock for mock is my only intent" (V.ii.140) illustrates the never-ending temporality of the games played by the courtiers of Navarre and France. Each game is therefore overthrown by another and bound to start again. The repeated accusations of cheating we have underlined only interrupt the pattern of play temporarily so it can start anew, so much so that the games cannot reach a clear and indisputable conclusion at the end of the play. Furthermore, the highly symmetrical pattern of the play which focuses on two groups, or teams, of four characters also brings to the fore this endless cycle: each game is played between all eight protagonists in a repetitive motion as we can see each time the two courts meet. In V.ii, the Princess of France also argues that games have no other purpose than themselves in a cue that highlights the inherent sterility of any "sport":

PRINCESS. That sport best pleases that doth least know how –  
Where zeal strives to content, and the contents  
Dies in the zeal of that which it presents;  
Their form confounded makes most form in mirth,  
When great things labouring perish in their birth.  
V.ii.511-515

Berowne then argues this definition can be applied not only to the pageant of the Nine Worthies but to their own pastimes as well: "A right description of our sport, my lord" (V.ii.516). The purpose of such games, therefore, is none other but a simple "lining to the time" (V.ii.755) as the Princess puts it at the very end of the play. However, the escapist and circular temporality of such games is brought to an abrupt end by Marcadé's announcement of the death

of the king of France in V.ii. Only an exterior disruption as unsettling as the death of the Princess's father could end the repetitive pattern of their play. The endless succession of their games only momentarily allows the characters of the play to "[neglect] time" as Berowne says in one of his last cues: "For your fair sakes have we neglected time,/ Played foul play with our oaths" (V.ii.729-730). Indeed, "pastimes" are construed as a way of diverting the characters from the thought of death and the passing of time, as shown by the meaning of the word "solace" in Berowne's cue in IV.iii: "We will with some strange pastime solace them, / Such as the shortness of time can shape" (IV.iii.346-347). As we can see in the *OED*, in this occurrence, "solace" both means "to cheer, comfort, console" and "to entertain or recreate". The conflation of these two meanings is particularly enlightening. According to Jean-Charles Darmon, the thought of distraction as a way to escape from the thought of death and grief originated in Montaigne's *Essais* and represented a significant early modern shift in the theories on distraction that had usually been described by earlier philosophers rather as a way to steer clear of harmful passions.<sup>29</sup> In this perspective, this sudden irruption of death on stage forces the characters to acknowledge the irreversible temporality of human life and to relinquish their past witty jests and taunts for "honest plain words" (V.ii.727). Indeed, a shadow is cast on their past sport at the close of the play as Berowne, who has been tasked by Rosaline to "enforce the pained impotent to smile" (V.ii.822) declares "Mirth cannot move a soul in agony" (V.ii.825). In fact, Berowne's allusion to "A death's face in a ring" (V.ii.598) during the pageant of the Nine Worthies already paves the way for the motif of the *memento mori*. The end of *Love's Labour's Lost* could therefore be seen as a theatrical enactment of the *memento mori* as, in the end, it reminds its

characters as well as its audience of the true purpose of play, namely, to cheat the “cormorant devouring time” (I.i.4) the King of Navarre alludes to in his opening cue.

By overturning the ludic ideals of courtly conversation embodied by the image of tennis, Shakespeare draws our attention to the less refined and certainly more comical dimension of wit and jests in *Love's Labour's Lost*. However, the playful tone of the comedy enhanced by these continual games and jests between the two courts is also tempered by the darker themes of violence and death that repeatedly crop up throughout the play before bringing it to its very sudden end. Very much like other Shakespearean comedies, such as *Twelfth Night*, the comedy that is *Love's Labour's Lost* is also comprised of more tragic undertones. The depiction of games in the play illustrates its generic ambiguity as they both significantly contribute to the play's comical and satirical dimensions and hint at the characters' essential anxiety regarding the irreversible passing of time. In this respect, *Love's Labour's Lost* can be described as a theatrical *vanitas* in which the merriments of the youthful “academe” of Navarre are inherently linked to a deep-seated awareness of the fundamentally transient nature of such pleasures.

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## NOTES

1. Louis A. Montrose, ““Sport by sport o'erthrown”: *Love's Labour's Lost* and the Politics of Play”, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol.18, N°4, Winter 1977: 528-552.
2. Katherine R. Larson, “Conversational Games and the Articulation of Desire in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory*”, *English Literary Renaissance*, Volume 40, Issue 2, Spring 2010: 165-190.

3. Donatella Baldini, "The Play of the Courtier: Correspondences between Castiglione's *Il libro del Cortegiano* and Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*", *Quaderni d'Italianistica* 18, 1997: 5-22.
4. All references to *Love's Labour's Lost* are taken from William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. William C. Carroll, Cambridge, CUP, 2009.
5. Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, transl. by Thomas Hoby, London, published by David Nutt, 1900, p. 154.
6. "ARMADO Now by the salt wave of the Mediterranean, a sweet touch, a quick venue of wit! Snip, snap, quick and home. It rejoiceth my intellect. True wit!" (V.i.49-51).
7. "Shakespeare's comedy captures perfectly the mockery of those real-life court conversations into which the endless jostle for personal space and prestige was sublimated" (John Turner in *Shakespeare: Out of Court: Dramatizations of Court Society*, London, Macmillan Press, 1990, p. 25).
8. George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy: A Critical Edition*, eds. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2007, p. 321.
9. George Puttenham, *op. cit.*, p. 292.
10. Stefano Guazzo, *The Art of Conversation*, printed for J. Brett, London, 1738 [1581], p. 118.
11. Baldassare Castiglione, *op. cit.*, p.370.
12. Jean Michel-Déprats translates these lines as follows: "Balles bien renvoyées, joli jeu d'esprit" in William Shakespeare, *Comédies I, (Œuvres complètes, V)*, Paris, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 2013, p. 769.
13. "Most humbly complayning shew unto your hignesse your daily orators, the Bowiers, Fletchers, Stringers and Arrowhead makers of this your realme, that where for the advancement and maintenance of Archerie, the better to be maintained and had within the same, and for the avoiding of divers and many unlawfull games and plaies, occupied and practised within this realme, to the great hurt and let of shooting and Archerie [...]. Be it also enacted by the authority aforesaid that no maner of Artificer or Craftsman of any handicraft or occupation [...] or any servingman, shall from the said feast of nativity of St John Baptist, play at the Tables, Tennis, Dice, Cards, Bowles, Cloith, Coiting, [...] or any other unlawfull game out of Christmas, under paine of twenty shillings to be forfeit for every time [...]" in *The statutes at large: conteyning all such acts which at any time heretofore haue beene extant in print from Magna Charta, vntill the sixteenth yeere of the raigne of our most gracious soueraigne lord Iames*, London, 1618, p. 735-738.
14. "Undoubtedly they that write of the firste inventions of thinges / have good cause to suppose Lucifer prince of devilles / to be the firste inventour of dice playing / and helle the place where it was founde /" (First Book, Chapter XXVI, in Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named The Governour*, 1531, <http://pages.uoregon.edu/rbear/gov/gov1.htm>, last accessed February 26 2015).



15. Baldassare Castiglione, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

16. On jesting: "Also it appeareth propre to the Spaniardes to invent meerie conceits." Baldassare Castiglione, *op. cit.*, p. 153. On chess and other games: "There be many Spaniardes excellent at it, and in many other games, whiche for all that bestowe not much studie upon it, nor yet lay aside the compassing of other matters" (*ibid.*, p. 140).

17. Moreover, the oaths themselves might be seen as a form of bet between Longaville, Dumaine, Berowne and Navarre as they test each other's capacity to enforce the oath they have taken.

18. Unlike Berowne's previous mention of the word "trick" (V.ii.416) which meant "trace", here it probably refers to the first meaning we find in the *OED*: "A crafty or fraudulent device of a mean or base kind; an artifice to deceive or cheat; a stratagem, ruse, wile; esp. in phrase *to play (show) one a trick, to put a trick or tricks upon.*"

19. Longaville also refers to Berowne's arguments as "glozes" (IV.iii.339) which are defined in the *OED* as "2. A. Flattery, deceit; an instance of this, a flattering speech, etc."

20. "Its nine scenes, astonishingly few for a play so long, are alive with the tensions that typify the rhythms of courtly relationships in their most characteristic field of competition, where festive pleasure and the threat of violence were never far apart: conversation" (John Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 20).

21. 14.a. *Sport and Games*. Contrary to rule or established custom, irregular, unfair; said also of the player. [...] b. *esp. in foul play*: unfair conduct in a game; *transf.* unfair or treacherous dealing, often with the additional notion of roughness or violence.

22. Baldassare Castiglione, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

23. PRINCESS. The effect of my intent is to cross theirs.

They do it but in mockery merriment,

And mock for mock is my only intent. (V.ii.138-140) 24. Thomas Hoby, *The Book of the Courtier*, 1561.

25. Paul G. Brewster, "Games and Sports in Shakespeare", *FF communications* edited for the Folklore Fellows, vol. LXXII, n°177, 1959, p. 149.

26. According to Paul G. Brewster, pushpin is "a game where the player tried to push his pin so that it will lie across that of his opponent" (*ibid.*).

27. According to Heiner Gillmeister tennis originated in the cloisters of France in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (*Tennis, A Cultural History*, London, Leicester University Press, 1998, p. 34).

28. Louis A. Montrose, *op. cit.*, p. 548.

29. "Mais Montaigne – on s'en est trop peu étonné – déporte la pratique de la diversion de l'expérience de l'amour (qui sert de paradigme à sa légitimation dans les vers de Lucrèce qu'il cite) à celle de la pensée de la mort – il n'est nullement question d'incitation à la diversion au sujet de la mort, ni dans le *De rerum natura*, ni dans aucun texte source du corpus épicurien. Comme si la pensée de la mort relevait, en l'occurrence, de la même

thérapeutique morale que cette frénésie érotique dont la diversion, dans les vers du chant IV de Lucrèce, nous aidait à guérir, en nous en détournant.

Détournement, déplacement, au sens le plus fort, qui entre en résonance, dans le même essai, avec l'expérience de la mort de La Boétie, et de la ruse qui permet à Montaigne d'en soulager le chagrin : Montaigne rappelle, dans le paragraphe qui suit immédiatement les vers de Lucrèce, comme c'est en se faisant artificiellement amoureux qu'il essaya de se divertir de la mort de son ami. [...]

Pratique, vis-à-vis de la mort, bien peu « voisine » en vérité de la philosophie d'Epicure ! Pour le Sage du Jardin, c'est bien plutôt à la pensée de la mort comme « rien », rien pour nous, qu'il conviendrait de s'adonner, et non à son occultation di-vertissante" (Jean-Charles Darmon, *Philosophies du divertissement Le Jardin imparfait des Modernes*, Paris, Editions Desjonquères, 2009, p. 24-25).

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## ABSTRACTS

This paper aims at exploring the different playful uses of games, especially games of wit, in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and their meaning. My argument is that through the many occurrences of cheating and "foul play" which pervade the text, *Love's Labour's Lost* depicts a satire of early modern courtly games. The sophisticated games of wit and sports propounded by courtesy books of the time – such as Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of The Courtier* or Stefano Guazzo's *Civil Conversation* for instance – are repeatedly turned into bawdy banter and less dignified distractions. They are also opposed to the greater simplicity of children's games throughout the play. This satire draws our attention to the undercurrent of violence pervading courtly forms of play. It also paves the way for a deeper reflexion on the relation between playing and time in which pastimes are construed as a way to evade the thought of death eventually embodied on stage by the arrival of Marcadé in the final act. In this perspective, *Love's Labour's Lost* may also be read as a form of theatrical memento mori reminding its characters as well as its audience of the inherent sterility of the games they play.

Cet article vise à analyser les différentes représentations de jeux et plus précisément de jeux d'esprit dans *Love's Labour's Lost* ainsi que leur signification. En effet, à travers les nombreuses occurrences de tricherie ou de « foul play » qui parsèment le texte, *Love's Labour's Lost* dessine une satire des jeux de cour de l'époque moderne. Les jeux sophistiqués,

jeux d'esprit ou sports, dont des livres de courtoisie de l'époque – comme *Le Livre du Courtisan* de Baldassare Castiglione, ou *La Conversation civile* de Stefano Guazzo – font l'éloge sont transformés à plusieurs reprises en jeux de mots grossiers ou en divertissements moins respectables. Cette satire attire notre sur la violence qui sous-tend les différents jeux que l'on trouvait à la cour. Elle permet également d'aboutir à une réflexion plus approfondie sur la relation entre le jeu et le temps dans laquelle les passetemps sont perçus comme un moyen d'échapper à la pensée de la mort, incarnée sur scène par l'arrivée de Marcadé au dernier acte. Dans cette perspective, *Love's Labour's Lost* peut aussi être lue comme une forme de memento mori dramatique rappelant à ses personnages ainsi qu'à son public la stérilité fondamentale de leurs jeux et de tout divertissement.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** Peines d'amour perdues, jeu, jeu de mots, divertissement **Keywords:** Love's Labour's Lost, wit, wordplay, pastimes

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# Jesting in Earnest in *Love's Labour's Lost*

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In his introduction to the Arden edition of *Love's Labour's Lost*, Henry Woudhuysen suggests that the main difficulty facing directors and actors of the play is “judging the play’s tone”.<sup>1</sup> He goes on to describe the difficulty as a matter of assessing the degree of seriousness to be attached to a given scene or action. Adducing the opening oath-taking scene as an example, he asks, “how seriously is an audience to take the play’s opening vows?”<sup>2</sup>

In this paper, I would like to argue that the tonal indeterminacy Woudhuysen identifies as a directing challenge is also a structural feature of the play, and part of an underlying discourse about shifting assumptions and values. In order to narrow the field, I will confine the scope of my discussion to a specific instance of tonal indeterminacy which I will hereafter refer to as the “dubious jest”. By this I mean a statement that leaves the listener – on or off stage – wondering whether the words are to be taken at face value, or as a joke. I will first demonstrate the prevalence of such statements in the play through a few choice examples and discuss what makes their seriousness so difficult to determine. I will then argue that these statements share a pattern, involving promises and hyperbole. This pattern allows the play to point away from the immediate

dramatic context and towards courtroom hermeneutics as providing a possible interpretative blueprint. This detour by way of legal hermeneutics will lead to an emphasis on performance as the arbitrator of meaning, as well as on the axiological dimension of performative choices. I will conclude by suggesting that *Love's Labour's Lost* offers a very specific take on the commonplace of a play as a "mirror held up to nature". 3

## 1. Dubious jokes

In the first act, when the King of Navarre reminds a reluctant Berowne that he swore an oath to fast and study with him for three years, the latter replies that he "swore in jest" (I.i.54). 4 The statement is a masterpiece of ambiguity. For one thing, given the sacred, performative and self-validating dimension of an oath, it is not immediately clear what "swearing in jest" implies, or even whether it is not a contradiction in terms. For another, given the jocularly already displayed in the scene, the disclaimer itself, rather than the original oath, may be "in jest". In other words, Berowne may be joking about joking. The indeterminacy is amplified by the fact that the spoken oath, as opposed to the signing ceremony, took place off stage, in the story time before the beginning of the dramatic action, so that the tone in which the words were spoken is withheld from the audience, though not from the other characters.

Berowne's disclaimer sets a pattern for the rest of the play, involving statements whose degree of seriousness is obfuscated or problematic. The most remarkable of these may be Longaville's proclamation that any woman coming within a mile of Navarre's court will "lose her tongue" (I.i.122). It seems that the clause is not to be taken seriously, as Longaville assures a shocked Berowne that

it is meant primarily as a deterrent. In fact, by the time the Princess and her retinue arrive, the clause has been effectively forgotten by all concerned, and the otherwise well-informed ladies do not even bother to mention it. And yet, we remain uncomfortably aware that the mutilation clause remains inscribed in the decree, and thus officially “on the books”.

The ladies, too, are given to ambiguous statements, as when the hunting Princess announces that she will claim she missed on purpose if she fails to hit a deer. This seems to be a joke, given that the excuse is formulated before the fact and explicitly identified as a form of rationalization; yet the context suggests genuine compassion for the hunted animal, and creates indeterminacy as to whether the Princess is shooting to kill. The Princess again indulges in obfuscation near the end of the play. Bookending Longaville’s threat of mutilation, the Princess “protest[s]” she would not enter the King’s palace, even at the risk of enduring “a world of torments” (V.ii.352-354). This would seem an obvious exaggeration, had the Princess not previously emphasized the binding nature of the words “I protest” (II.i.155). When the King of Navarre “protest[ed]” that he had never received payment from the King of France, the Princess “arrest[ed his] word” (II.i.157).

At stake in these dubious jests is the kind of world that is being represented. In a realistic world, for example, the issue of whether the young men’s vows are to be taken seriously would be a moot point. How can a promise to abstain from food and sleep be anything *but* a joke? Assessing the kind of world being represented is of course primarily a generic issue. Taking the simple Aristotelian definition of tragedy as a serious genre, and of comedy as being about trivial matters, we – if not the characters – should be able to lift some of the indeterminacies mentioned above. For example, given the play’s

billing as “pleasant comedy”, it would seem obvious that Longaville’s decree about cutting out women’s tongues is not to be taken seriously. After all, this is not *Titus Andronicus*. However, invoking genre as a hermeneutics is a tricky business. Though a play’s billing is one indication, our classification of Shakespeare’s plays derives mainly from the 1623 Folio, which made some questionable choices, such as classifying *Cymbeline* as a tragedy. Besides, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*’s status as a comedy is notoriously iffy, as hinted meta-dramatically by Berowne’s statement that the story “does not end like an old play” (V.ii.842). Ultimately, then, determining genre must be based on the text itself, which makes any attempt at invoking genre as a means of interpreting statements a circular process, or at best a heuristic one.

Similarly, invoking form will not get the hearer or reader very far in assessing whether to take a statement as a joke or not. That is because the dubious jests referred to above are based on two patterns not instantly recognizable as markers of facetiousness. These patterns include a speech-act, namely the promise, or statement of intention, and a trope, the hyperbole. Berowne’s opening statement that he “swore in jest” clearly partakes of both figures, involving a promise to abstain from basic necessities that could be taken as an overemphatic way of saying that he will study very hard. Similarly, when the Princess “rates” the lords’ words of praise as “pleasant jest” (V.ii.754), she is referring to hyperbolic eulogizing, combined with an implicit, but insincere, promise to wed.

Though false promises and hyperbole do appear as figures of jesting in Quintilian’s *Institutes*, <sup>5</sup> most classical and Renaissance treatises put the main emphasis on another classification, derived from Cicero’s *De Oratore*. In Cicero’s classification, jokes are divided into

two main categories, which include the amusing anecdote and the clever rejoinder, or one-liner. <sup>6</sup> The main difference between such jokes and those involving promises and/or hyperbole is one of framing. Anecdotes and one-liners may be formally set apart from serious discourse, as in such introductory clauses as, “did you hear the one about the traveling salesman?” These frames make uptake or recognition of the jesting mode easy. The problem with jokes based on promises and hyperbole is that they are formally no different from serious statements. In *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, this problem is brought home by an emphasis on the framing devices that characterize conventional forms of speech such as the sonnet, the eulogy, the love letter, the Latin quote or the legal edict. In the absence of formal markers, recognizing a promise or hyperbolic statement as a joke is a matter of extrapolating the speaker’s meaning, or intention, based on factors lying outside the words of the statement itself.

However, the form of *Love Labour’s Lost*’s dubious jests may be seen as a help as well as a hindrance. This is because unmeant promises and hyperbolic statements do not automatically fall under the category of jokes. They are perhaps more readily identified as lies, bragging, poetic fancy, or idle threats. In fact, George Puttenham called the hyperbole the “loud liar” in his quirky classification of traditional figures of speech, <sup>7</sup> and Quintilian associated jesting with lying. <sup>8</sup> The many forms of untruthfulness associated with promising and exaggerating allow the play to align ambiguous statements belonging to different realms of discourse, suggesting a possible transference of hermeneutic method from one realm to another.

## 2. The use of courtroom hermeneutics



Shakespeare's decision to introduce joking in the form of promises and/or hyperbole allows him to extend the dynamics of jesting to discursive activities normally thought of as serious. These include Petrarchan love poetry, which is based on the hyperbolic image of the woman as a goddess, as well as forms of legal discourse involving a threat of disproportionate punishment as a deterrent to crime. The play in fact illustrates the kind of mental gymnastics by which these figures can serve as a gateway from one realm of discourse to another. In particular, the mercurial nature of hyperbole is underscored by its subtle transference from a realm where it is to be expected – love poetry – to one where it is not, i.e. legal language. When Longaville attempts to rationalize his deviation from his vow not to associate with women, he argues that as his lady is a goddess, and not a woman, he hasn't broken his vow (IV.iii.56-57). This relocation of Petrarchan hyperbole to the quasi-legal realm of formal oaths may be taken as the character's sophistry, but it also suggests the possibility of importing hermeneutic patterns from one realm to another. In particular, the play's use of hyperbole and broken promises suggests that means of establishing intention in the courtroom may also apply to the interpretation of jokes.

The problem of assessing intention was in fact a topical one when Shakespeare was writing *Love's Labour's Lost*, in particular in the realm of the law. As scholars such as Lorna Hutson, Charles Spinosa and Luke Wilson have pointed out, establishing intention was an increasingly central concern in legal practice, appearing in at least three late sixteenth-century developments. <sup>9</sup> The first of these developments was the new prominence of actions of *assumpsit*, meaning "he undertook" or "he promised", by which private deals were framed as contracts, or promises to deliver, as opposed to immediately effective transfers of goods. The second, relating to

criminal trials, was the practice of encoding criminal intention in the circumstances of the crime, as opposed to associating it with the criminal's actual state of mind. Luke Wilson refers to this development as the "modularity of intention", <sup>10</sup> meaning that intention was now detachable from the individual conscience. The third development was the introduction of the principle of equity into the common law courts. Equity, the principle of mitigating the harshness of the letter of the law in particular cases, was traditionally the precinct of the courts of Chancery. In the sixteenth-century, as Lorna Hutson has shown, Edmund Plowden's *Commentaries* brought equity to the common law, and defined it as a matter of establishing the lawmaker's original intention. <sup>11</sup> The three developments established intention – both the defendant and the lawmaker's – as a crucial elements in legal practice, but also as something to be reconstructed, or retrospectively imagined. Of the three developments, I would argue that the principle of equity is the most relevant to *Love's Labour's Lost*.

In the play, the principle of equity, though not evoked explicitly, seems to underpin the way laws, edicts and proclamations are enforced. The harshness of the law is systematically mitigated, as when the clause about women losing their tongues is forgotten, or when the year-long penalty for consorting with a woman is reduced from a year to a week, then to a few hours in Costard's case. However, the actual workings of equity are illustrated in less obvious places as well. Berowne's somewhat sophisticated analysis of the purpose of the edict he is so reluctant to sign appears as something of a parody of the intellectual process behind the practice of equity.

BEROWNE. What is the end of study, let me know?

KING. Why, that to know which else we should not know.

BEROWNE. Things hid and barred, you mean, from common sense?

KING. Ay, that is study's god-like recompense.

BEROWNE. Come on then, I will swear to study so  
To know the thing I am forbid to know:  
And thus, to study well where I may dine,  
When I to feast expressly am forbid;  
Or study where to meet some mistress fine,  
When mistresses from common sense are hid;  
Or having sworn too hard-a-keeping oath,  
Study to break it and not break my troth.  
I.i.55-66

With this Socratic line of questioning, Berowne is – facetiously – attempting to replace the letter of the law with its spirit, or original intention. He is arguing that the spirit of the law is the promotion of study, and that the method used to reach that goal – corresponding to the letter of the law – is irrelevant. This is the legal principle of *pro bono publico* or “the public good”, by which the broader purpose of a law trumps its specific provisions. The irony, here, is that Berowne is reconstructing original intention in the presence of the framer, the King himself, rather, as in equitable reconstruction, than compensating for the framer’s absence with an act of imaginative extrapolation. This, of course, draws attention to the necessarily fictitious dimension of equitable reconstruction, and to its performative nature.

### 3. Performance as the arbitrator of intention

The fictitious dimension of equitable reconstruction is apparent in Edmund Plowden’s explanation of how equity is applied by the judiciary:

And in order to form a right judgement when the letter of a Statute is restrained, and when enlarged, by Equity, it is a good Way, when you peruse a Statute, to suppose that the Law-maker is present, and that you have asked him the Question you want to know touching the Equity, then you must give yourself such an Answer as you imagine he would have done, if he had been present. <sup>12</sup>

In Plowden's instructions, as has often been noted, <sup>13</sup> the judge is being asked to reconstruct the lawmaker's intention by what amounts to turning him into a dramatic character, and placing him in a scene with himself. This dramatization of the legal text highlights the similarity between a judge working his way back to the lawmaker's original intention and a reader of a play attempting to assess a character's tone, meaning the way he or she intends his or her words to be taken. It is a truism that a character has no existence outside of the dramatic text. This is not strictly true of the legislator, who once lived, but for all intents and purposes, the lawmaker is only present in the text of the law. In both cases, it is to be noted, intention is established in the shift from text to performance. Yet this requires some discussion of the possible meanings of "performance".

As Luke Wilson reminds us, <sup>14</sup> Shakespeare was writing at a time when the word "performance" was shifting from its promissory to its theatrical meaning. The terms refer respectively to "performing what one has promised to do", and "performing a play". When it comes to determining whether a promise is to be taken at face value or as a joke, both meanings are relevant. To illustrate the way performance clarifies intention in the promissory sense, we may adduce the example of the Princess's hunting expedition. The ambiguity created by the Princess' equivocation about her intention to hit the deer is definitively lifted in the next scene, when a dialogue between Holofernes and Nathaniel conveys the information that the Princess has indeed performed the act of bringing down the deer. Yet the proximity of the promissory and the theatrical meanings of "performance" suggests that *dramatic* performance may be another way of establishing intention. If we now turn to the eavesdropping scene (IV.iii.1-210), in which the lords overhear each

other reading their love sonnets out loud, and compare it with the one in which the ladies read the same sonnets in silence (V.ii.1-78), we may note a hermeneutic discordance. When the young men hear and watch each other performing the sonnets, they are immediately convinced of their sincerity. However, when the young ladies read the sonnets, they dismiss them as “hypocrisy” (V.ii.31) and “pleasant jest” (V.ii.754). Of course, the young men’s performance is of words they have written themselves. The situation is different for actors or stage directors, for whom performance involves interpretative choices. Such interpretative activity, the play emphasizes, is ultimately a matter of projecting values, a matter of ethics.

The connection between jokes and ethics goes back at least to Cicero. Though Cicero’s *De Oratore* does not explicitly link joking with values, the connection was implicit in his use of jokes in the courtroom. As Anthony Corbeil points out in *Controlling Laughter*, jokes “simultaneously creat[ed] and enforc[ed] the community’s ethical values”.<sup>15</sup> This seems to follow naturally from Cicero’s discussion of jesting in *De Oratore*, where he described “deformity”<sup>16</sup> as the most laugh-worthy object. For Cicero, physical deformity reflected moral deformity, so that laughter was seen as the natural response to ugliness and immorality. The implication was that in order to laugh together, people needed to agree about what was ugly or immoral. This connection between laughter and a shared ethics also implies that ambiguous jokes reflect conflicting values.

In the play, ambiguous expressions of intention are connected with shifting or problematic values, in particular through contextual or topical allusions. One example is the Princess’s profession of pity for the deer she is about to kill and her description of herself as a “murderer” (IV.i.8). The Princess explicitly relates her own equivocation to the paradoxical standards of her society, in which

“shooting well is [...] accounted ill” (IV.i.25). In this instance, as Edward Berry and Matthew Cartmill have pointed out, the world of the play mirrors Elizabethan society, with its contending and conflicting attitudes towards hunting. Both critics have linked the Princess’s expression of pity for the hunted animal with George’s Gascoigne’s *Art of Venerie*, each section of which is prefaced by a poem in the animal’s voice, complaining about the cruelty of man. The Hart’s preface is a case in point:

I am the Harte, by Greekes surnamed so  
Bicause my heade, doth with their tearmes agree  
For stately shape, fewe such on earth do go,  
So that by right, they have so termed mee.  
For Kings delight, it seemes I was ordeyned  
Whose huntsmen yet, pursue me day by day,  
In Forest, chace and Park, I am constrayned,  
Before their Houndes, to wander many away.  
Wherefore who lyst, to learne the perfect trade,  
Of Venerie: and therewithall would knowe,  
What properties, and vertues nature made,  
In one (poore Hart, oh harmlesse Hart) to growe,  
Let him giue ear, to skilfull *Trystam’s* lore,  
To *Phoebus* , *Fowylloux* , and many more. <sup>17</sup>

Significantly, though, Berry and Cartmill disagree about whether these poems should be taken as the author’s expression of compassion for hunted game, or as a joke. In Berry’s words:

Although Matt Cartmill (*A View to a Death in the Morning* ; 82-83) suggests that the device might have been intended as a joke, and therefore might imply no sympathy for the animals themselves, Gascoigne’s ambiguous social position and his cynicism toward war are more likely to have made him genuinely ambivalent about the very art that he describes. <sup>18</sup>

Such ethical tensions, in a given culture, may be a prelude to a paradigm shift, a change in the culture’s values. In *Love’s Labour’s Lost* , choosing dubious promises as the template for tonal indeterminacy allows Shakespeare to emphasize the time gap between statement of

intent and performance, and to associate that time gap with axiological change. A hint of this connection between changing times and changing values appears in Berowne's excuse for the lords' failure to perform the promise inscribed in the edict. When unmasked by Costard's production of his love letter to Rosaline, Berowne cries out: "young blood doth not obey an old decree" (IV.iii.208). The statement is somewhat paradoxical, given that the "old decree" was made only days previously, by the lords themselves, when they were necessarily even younger than they are now. <sup>19</sup> Though Berowne here seems to be opposing youthful vigour and austere age, he is also measuring the time elapsed between the framing of a law and its enforcement in terms of change, and asserting the primacy of the new order. This awareness of changing values is implicit in Plowden's definition of equity, which we will now briefly return to.

Returning to Plowden's text, we may wonder how the method is to be applied. What, in particular, is implied by imagining "what [the lawmaker] would have done, had he been here"? Is the judge supposed to imagine the lawmaker stepping out of his historical era decked out in old-fashioned clothes, speech and values, or is he to imagine a spruced up and updated version of the lawmaker more in tune with the times? Should the judge extract the original lawmaker's standards and apply them to the circumstances of the case, or is he expected to imagine what the lawmaker would have said had he been alive "today" and thus presumably partaken of the new standards of the time? This is a problem routinely confronted in American law, where Supreme Court Justices have introduced the concept of "evolving standards of decency" <sup>20</sup> in order to make the original intent of the framers of the constitution compatible with changing mores. No such teleological concept existed in

Shakespeare's day, yet an awareness of the contingency of religious and moral values existed, as expressed, for example, in Montaigne's "Apologie de Raymond de Sebonde".<sup>21</sup> Let us note that Plowden's phrasing is sufficiently vague to accommodate a conception of equitable reconstruction that involves some degree of projection.

A hint that projection is similarly appropriate when assessing jokes appears near the end of the play when Rosaline tells Berowne that "a jest's propensity lies in the ear/ Of him that hears it, never in the tongue/ Of him that makes it" (V.ii.829-831). This can be taken as a meta-dramatic hint that the audience is the ultimate arbitrator of whether a statement is to be taken as a joke or not. The audience's response will of course be mediated by the stage manager's choices and the actor's performance. These in turn will be highly affected by the times and mores of the culture presenting the performance.

Though we can only guess, it seems inevitable that the tone of *Love's Labour's Lost* was intrinsically different in the late sixteenth-century from what it is in performances today. For example, Berowne's semi-Petrarchan conceit about "Love's Tyburn" (IV.iii.46) would probably have carried darker undertones at a time when public hangings were routinely carried out, just as his remark about the plague (V.ii.421) would have spoken to real fears in the audience, at a time when the disease was still a frequent caller to London. One speculates that as Western society moved towards a "kinder, gentler" set of values and realities, jokes about brutal death would lose their sting and the "pleasant comedy" would become even more pleasant.

It is thus inevitable that our interpretation of ambiguous jokes should involve a degree of projection. In deciding whether or not to take a statement as a joke, audiences must choose among a cornucopia of axiological frameworks, including, perhaps overwhelmingly, the dominant values of their own culture. The



play's emphasis on making the recipient the arbitrator of intention lends certain legitimacy to the audience's semi-instinctive projection of the standards of their own time and culture onto the text of the play. By our standards, Longaville must be joking about cutting out women's tongues, because he is characterized as a pleasant young man and pleasant young men don't believe in maiming women. Similarly, the Princess must be joking about "enduring a thousand torments" because after all, she is a lively lady and lively ladies don't go in for martyrdom.

And yet, as we have seen, the play does not entirely let us get away with these glib assumptions. At least the written text does not, though a sufficiently upbeat production may <sup>22</sup>. A sense of lingering discomfort hovers over these doubtful jests thanks in part to the play's generic indeterminacies. Thus even as the play authorizes a soft reading, in which characters behave as they would in our own culture, it reminds us that what is clearly a joke in one set of circumstances may become dead serious in even only slightly altered circumstances. Longaville's contribution to the proclamation, in particular, is a reminder that given the right circumstances, a well-spoken young man may be capable of unspeakable acts.

The play thus emphasizes the contingency of a joke's effect, in a departure from the stance taken by most Renaissance treatises on jesting. Most of these, including Balthazar Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, and Thomas Wilson's *Art of Rhetoric*, take up Cicero's rules and examples as if they were timeless and universal. As Barbara Bowen points out, "considering how un-funny most of Cicero's *facetiae* are, we wonder why so many of them survived unchanged through the Renaissance". <sup>23</sup> This "recycling of Ciceronian jokes", <sup>24</sup> as Bowen calls it, is consistent with the backward and imitative

thrust of humanist writing, and with the resulting temptation to evade the issue of axiological change. In contrast, *Love's Labour's Lost*, with its foreign visitors and ghostly fathers, exhibits an awareness of other times and other places, and the hermeneutic difficulty of communicating across cultural lines.

Shakespeare's use of ambiguous joking in *Love's Labour's Lost* offers an illustration of the definition of a play as "a mirror held up to nature" quite different from that evoked in *Hamlet*, a play written about seven years later. In Shakespeare's most famous tragedy, the eponymous Prince of Denmark explained that a play was a chronicle of the time (II.ii.515). This is consistent with the tragic genre, and its close association with historical time. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, however, Shakespeare suggests that a play may act as a mirror of the audience's time. *Love's Labour's Lost*, then, is "a mirror held up to nature", but one that moves beyond the topicality of satire, or even the universality of moral allegory, and is made to mirror the values of whatever culture its director and audience belong to, while exposing those values as both contingent and brittle.

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## NOTES

1. William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. H.R.Woudhuysen, London and New York, Bloomsbury, Introduction, p. 97.
2. *Ibid*.
3. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Complete Works*, eds. John Jowett, William Montgomery, Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Oxford, OUP, 2005.
4. All quotations from *Love's Labour's Lost* are from the New Cambridge Shakespeare, ed. William C. Carroll, Cambridge, CUP, 2009.

5. Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* , Loeb, 1920-1922, book 6, chapter 3, sections 21 and 67, [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Quintilian/Institutio\\_Oratoria/6C\\*.html#3](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Quintilian/Institutio_Oratoria/6C*.html#3) (last accessed February 21<sup>st</sup> , 2015). Quintilian quotes Cicero's *locus classicus* about the man so tall he hit his head on the arch of Fabius.
6. Cicero, *De Oratore* , sections 240-248.
7. George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* , London, Richard Field, 1589, Book 3, Yij, p. 159, <http://eebo.chadwyck.com.proxy-scd.u-bourgogne.fr/> , image 81 (last accessed February 19<sup>th</sup> , 2015).
8. *Op.Cit.* , section 6.
9. See for example Luke Wilson, *Theaters of Intention, Drama and Law in Early Modern England* , Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2000, and Charles Spinosa, "The Transformation of Intentionality: Debt and Contract in *The Merchant of Venice* ", *English Literary Renaissance* , vol.24, issue 2, March 1994, p. 370-409.
10. Luke Wilson, " *Hamlet* , Hale vs. Petit and the Hysteresis of Action", *English Literary Renaissance* , Vol.60, n°1 (Spring, 1993), p.17-55, p.28.
11. See Lorna Hutson, "Not the King's Two Bodies", in *Rhetoric and Law in Early Modern Europe* , ed. Victoria Kahn & Lorna Hutson, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2002, p.168-169.
12. Edmund Plowden, *The Commentaries, or Reports of Edmund Plowden* (1571), His Majesty's Law Printers, London, 1779, p. 467.
13. See for example Peter G. Platt, *Shakespeare and the Culture of Paradox* , Farnam and Burlington, Ashgate, 2009, p. 136.
14. See Wilson, in Kahn & Hutson, ch.4, "Promissory Performances", p. 165-183.
15. Anthony Corbeill, *Political Humour in the Late Roman Republic* , Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996, p. 6.
16. Cicero, *De Oratore* , Book 2, section 239.
17. George Gascoigne, *The Noble Arte of Venerie* (1575), <http://eebo.chadwyck.com.proxy-scd.u-bourgogne.fr/> (last accessed February 19<sup>th</sup> , 2015).
18. Edward Berry, *Shakespeare and the Hunt* , Cambridge, CUP, 2001, p. 28.
19. Here we seem to have yet another instance of what Patricia Parker has identified as a "preposterous" pattern running through the play. See Patricia Parker, "Preposterous Reversals: *Love's Labour's Lost* ", *MLQ* , December 1993: 435-482.
20. The phrase was first used by Chief Justice Earl Warren in 1958, and has since become part of the jurisprudence of the Eighth Amendment, forbidding "cruel and unusual" punishment.
21. See Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais* (1580), Paris, Le livre de poche, 2001, p. 692-705.

22. In Kenneth Branagh's lively 2000 screen adaptation, for example, the possibility of discomfort arising from Longaville's mutilation clause is obviated by over-the-top histrionics, with the actor playing Longaville grimacing and wiggling his fingers in mock horror-movie style.

23. Barbara C. Bowen, *Humor and Humanism in the Renaissance*, Aldershot (UK) and Burlington (VT), Ashgate, 2004, p. 419.

24. *Ibid.*

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## ABSTRACTS

Berowne's feeble defense, when challenged by the King, that his vow to fast and remain celibate for three years at the court of Navarre was made "in jest" (I.i.54) ushers in a pattern of authorial obfuscation concerning whether characters' statements are to be taken at face value or as jokes. Though Shakespeare withholds conclusive textual evidence, such indeterminacies cannot easily be shrugged off as "*hors-texte*", as they are given prominence in the play by providing backbone to the plot, which can broadly be read as the women's attempt to gauge the young men's seriousness and reliability, and also through alignment with contemporary legal debates around the issues of criminal intention and equity. With its invocation of courtroom hermeneutics, the play suggests that performative reconstruction is the key to establishing a fictional speaker's intention. Such reconstruction, in the playhouse as in the courtroom, implies a projection of new standards onto an old text. Ultimately, then, *Love's Labour's Lost's* dubious jests highlight the contingency of moral values, and their fragility.

Lorsque le roi de Navarre rappelle à Berowne qu'il a juré de passer trois années de jeune et de célibat à la cour, celui-ci répond que ce serment n'était que simple boutade. Sur le même modèle, on relève dans la pièce une récurrence d'énoncés dont le niveau de sérieux est difficile à jauger. Si le texte ne permet pas de trancher, ces ambiguïtés ne peuvent pas non plus être reléguées au « hors-texte », dans la mesure où la pièce les met en exergue, d'abord en les associant au mouvement de l'intrigue (qu'on peut assimiler aux efforts déployés par les quatre jeunes femmes pour éprouver le sérieux des jeunes lords), mais aussi en les rapportant aux discussions juridiques de l'époque portant sur l'intention criminelle et sur l'équité. Par son invocation de l'herméneutique juridique, la pièce laisse entendre que c'est à travers un processus de reconstruction qu'apparaît l'intention du locuteur. Que ce soit au

tribunal ou au théâtre, une telle reconstruction sous-entend une projection de normes nouvelles sur un texte ancien. En définitive, les plaisanteries ambiguës de *Love's Labour's Lost* mettent en évidence la contingence des valeurs morales, ainsi que leur fragilité.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** Peines d'amour perdues, boutade, équité, représentation, éthique, promesse, hyperbole **Keywords:** jesting, joking, equity, performance, ethics, Love's Labour's Lost, hyperbole

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# L'apprentissage et la connaissance

*Learning and Knowing*

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# *Peines d'amour perdues* ou le jeu des erreurs

Sophie Chiari

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« Sweet misprision ! » (IV.iii.96) s'exclame Berowne dans l'un des nombreux apartés qui jalonnent la scène des sonnets dans *Peine d'amour perdues*. Si le mot « misprision » désigne en premier lieu un acte répréhensible sur le plan juridique, le terme renvoie aussi, plus communément, à la notion d'erreur ou de quiproquo <sup>1</sup>. Or, dans une pièce qui, à sa façon, se présente comme une autre « comédie des erreurs », ces deux termes y sont employés à de nombreuses reprises. En effet, si le parc de Navarre rappelle le monde d'avant la chute, le faux pas de Costard, qui entretient avec Jaquenetta une relation charnelle dans les recoins d'un labyrinthe de verdure, suggère d'emblée que le ver est dans le fruit. Tout, dans la pièce, semble marqué au sceau de la faute : la langue ne cesse d'y fourcher, le savoir est enseigné par un maître incompetent, les lettres y sont tantôt mal écrites, tantôt incomprises, quand elles ne sont pas tout simplement remises au mauvais destinataire. Pire encore, les amoureux se trompent de maîtresse quand ils croient dur comme fer toucher enfin au but.

En somme, l'erreur y joue à cache-cache avec la vérité <sup>2</sup> parce que l'erreur, c'est le monde du jeu, de l'illusion, de l'envers du réel, alors que la vérité, elle, dévoile le ridicule, la maladie et la mort. Elle est

tout ce sur quoi Ferdinand et ses amis refusent d'ouvrir les yeux mais qu'ils finissent par découvrir par l'entremise des femmes au cours de la dernière scène. La dette à payer, désormais, c'est la diète, le long carême à venir qui succède au *carpe diem*. Berowne, le véritable antihéros de la pièce, porte alors bien son nom qui n'évoque pas seulement le mot « brown », la couleur de la mélancolie, mais aussi, par paronomase, l'adjectif « barren » (I.i.47, IV.ii.24, IV.iii.294) qui résonne singulièrement dans une comédie hantée par le spectre de l'infertilité.

Afin de comprendre quelle philosophie de l'erreur et de l'illusion Shakespeare déploie dans sa pièce au-delà de la simple force comique du malentendu et de la confusion, il s'agira, dans l'analyse qui suit, de mettre en lumière trois types d'erreurs particulièrement révélateurs. Qu'elle soit fille de l'ignorance, marque de la *copia* renaissante, ou trace de transgression, l'erreur shakespearienne serait-elle l'indice d'une nature humaine fondamentalement dévoyée, ou pourrait-elle au contraire être perçue et vécue comme une *felix culpa* nécessaire ?

## 1. « Poverty in wit » (V.ii.269) : l'erreur vulgaire

L'écriture équivoque de la pièce fait son miel de l'erreur, et l'incompétence rhétorique des principaux personnages révèle de nombreuses *maculae* (ou « fautes poétiques<sup>3</sup> ») qui guident le spectateur plus qu'elles ne l'égarent au sein de la carte du tendre shakespearienne. Le terme même d'« error » n'apparaît en effet qu'à trois reprises dans la pièce<sup>4</sup>, toutes dans le dernier acte qui figure une sorte d'épiphanie négative, où, faute d'apercevoir le bout du tunnel et d'épouser leur belle, Ferdinand et ses amis prennent enfin



conscience de ce qui aura été leur aveuglement tout au long de la pièce.

Au premier abord, seules la Princesse et ses suivantes, censées être vierges (donc *immaculées*, ou « sans tache »), ne commettent jamais d'erreur lorsqu'elles s'expriment. Rien d'étonnant à cela puisqu'elles sont françaises. En effet, selon le lexicographe John Florio, les demoiselles de France sont les meilleures ambassadrices de la langue vernaculaire <sup>5</sup>. Car si les hommes ont le monopole de l'écriture, les femmes, elles, dominent à l'oral et savent se servir de leur langue <sup>6</sup>. Seule exception dans la comédie shakespearienne, Jaquenetta, elle qui se trompe à l'acte 4 en décrivant la princesse comme déjà reine (« one of the strange queen's lords », IV.ii.113-116). Il est difficile de savoir si pareille bévue provient de la jeune ignorante, du scribe, ou de l'étourderie de Shakespeare <sup>7</sup>. Mais si la confusion est bien faite par Jaquenetta, elle en dit long sur l'attitude de la Princesse, car elle suggère que cette dernière se comporte déjà en souveraine avant même la mort de son père.

Aux antipodes de cette attitude, le roi de Navarre, Ferdinand, n'est guère à la hauteur de ses prérogatives. Les vers de la scène d'ouverture sont à ce titre particulièrement éloquents, car vouloir la gloire à tout prix relève d'une erreur stratégique pour l'obtenir. Les premiers mots du roi, semblables à une épitaphe, seront d'ailleurs parodiés quelques scènes plus loin par Holofernes qui se lance dans « une épitaphe improvisée sur la mort du cerf <sup>8</sup> ». La seconde est aussi ridicule que celle du roi paraît vaine et vide de sens. À ce point de notre analyse, l'emblème de Geoffrey Whitney intitulé « *Ridicula ambitio* » peut fournir une illustration pertinente de ce thème moral. Il évoque l'histoire d'un certain Hanno, s'ingéniant à convaincre des oiseaux qu'il a capturés qu'il est un dieu, espérant par là accéder à la gloire. Une fois libérés, les oiseaux s'envolent vers la forêt, oubliant

leur mission et jusqu'au nom de leur ancien maître, pour chanter à tue-tête leurs propres airs. Whitney en conclut que l'ambition démesurée ne peut aboutir qu'à un sentiment de honte<sup>9</sup>. Dans *Peines d'amour perdues*, pièce où l'on oublie les noms et où l'on est vite ridiculisé par moins ambitieux que soi, c'est aussi ce que s'attache à démontrer Shakespeare.

Comment, d'ailleurs, faire en sorte de perpétuer son nom alors que l'on se trompe sur celui d'autrui ? Dans la Bible, nommer quelque chose ou quelqu'un confère à celui qui nomme un pouvoir sur ce qu'il a nommé<sup>10</sup>. Dans la pièce, personne ne semble vraiment capable d'avoir la moindre autorité sur l'autre. À l'exception des jeunes femmes, chacun, à un moment ou à un autre, déforme le nom de son prochain. Camus disait que « mal nommer un objet, c'est ajouter au malheur de ce monde<sup>11</sup> ». Or, dans l'*Arcadie décomposée* de Ferdinand, on écorche allègrement les noms sans penser aux conséquences néfastes que peut engendrer la désacralisation du langage. Pourtant, sous ses airs idylliques, le malheur de Navarre est déjà suffisamment grand pour que l'on n'en rajoute pas. Il est gravé dans le marbre : la pièce débute sur un édit obligeant de jeunes et fougueux gentilshommes à vivre en reclus et à se repaître de savoir. « Trop bien nourri », l'esprit des jeunes aristocrates est d'ailleurs décrit comme « grossier et gras<sup>12</sup> » (« gross, gross ; fat, fat », V.ii.268).

Paradoxalement, les sujets de Ferdinand sont des férus de science et d'érudition, et c'est bien là que le bât blesse. Car *Peines d'amour perdues* est d'abord une comédie sur l'ignorance, et même ceux qui semblent relativement épargnés par la bêtise ou la naïveté ne disposent que d'un savoir lacunaire. Aussi peut-on dire que les bévues répétées du clown sont contagieuses au sein du royaume de Navarre. Parce qu'il ne fait pas partie de la bonne société, Costard vit

dans l'erreur et s'y complaît. Ce satiriste est son propre dieu et s'attribue le droit de parler et d'agir à sa guise, comme le fera d'ailleurs Jaques dans *Comme il vous plaira* : « I must have liberty / Withal, as large a charter as the wind, / To blow on whom I please, for so fools have » (II.vii.47-49). Tout comme Jaques s'attribue les qualités de l'Esprit Saint<sup>13</sup>, Costard se réfugie derrière le pouvoir de nommer, mal nommer, voire renommer les choses, et personne ne le délogera de l'espace à part qui est le sien.

À peine plus haut sur l'échelle sociale, les Neufs Preux brillent aussi par leurs déficiences. L'un d'entre eux, Armado, se rêve en amoureux transi, mais ne maîtrise que très imparfaitement les codes de l'idéal chevaleresque<sup>14</sup>. Aussi le torchon de Jaquenetta (« dishclout », V.ii.689) qu'il serre sur son cœur peut-il être interprété comme une première version, comique et grotesque, du mouchoir de Desdémone. Ce torchon est, lui aussi, une synecdoque, particulièrement déplaisante même si elle se veut comique, puisqu'elle assimile sa propriétaire à une souillon<sup>15</sup>. En d'autres termes, tout en pensant rendre hommage à sa dulcinée, l'Espagnol ne fait que la dénigrer un peu plus en soulignant sa basse extraction sociale.

Quant aux Neuf Preux pris dans leur ensemble, ils sont tout aussi ineptes. Même le maître d'école Holofernes se trompe dans ses choix scéniques destinés à éblouir son royal auditoire<sup>16</sup> et, lorsqu'il s'exprime, il produit une sorte de monstre rhétorique<sup>17</sup> qui ne peut qu'induire en erreur ses élèves et, plus largement, ses interlocuteurs.

## 2. « The letter is too long by half a mile » (V.ii.54) : de l'excès à l'erreur

Holofernes est donc celui qui, dans la pièce, échoue à éduquer et à convaincre parce sa rhétorique est celle de l'excès, y compris sur le plan phonétique. Aussi insiste-t-il lourdement sur l'importance qu'il y a, à ses yeux, de bien prononcer chaque lettre d'un mot :

I abhor such fanatical phantasimes, such insociable and point-devise companions, such rackers of orthography, as to speak 'dout' sine 'b', when he should say 'doubt'; 'det' when he should pronounce 'debt'—d, e, b, t, not d, e, t. He clepeth a claf, 'cauf'; half, 'hauf'; neighbour vocatur 'nebour'; 'neigh' abbreviated 'ne.' This is abhominable, which he would call 'abominable'. It insinuateth me of insanie. (V.i.15-21)

Sans doute le maître d'école applique-t-il ici avec un peu trop de zèle les règles énoncées dans d'innombrables traités de phonétique en vogue à l'époque, comme celui de G. De la Mothe, *The French alphabeth* (1592)<sup>18</sup>. De ce La Mothe, on sait seulement qu'il était un pédagogue français réfugié en Angleterre<sup>19</sup> (son nom a peut-être inspiré à Shakespeare celui de Moth). Son ouvrage, qui bénéficia d'une certaine renommée aux XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles, prodigue des conseils comme ceux que l'on rencontre à la page 8 de son traité bilingue : « pronounce distinctly. Softly, / Make no haste, open your mouth. / That is very well: that is well said ». Après avoir disserté sur la nécessité de s'exprimer dans une langue distinctement articulée, le pédagogue français entreprend d'expliquer à son lecteur qu'il faut bien prononcer toutes les voyelles, mais que de nombreuses consonnes doivent en revanche rester muettes<sup>20</sup>. Or, on l'aura compris, Holofernes, prend précisément les préceptes de De la Mothe à rebours, tout comme il récite l'alphabet à l'envers à la demande (« What is 'a,b' spelled backward [...] », V.i.40-41).

Abécédaires à l'envers et règles phonétiques inversées font ici partie d'un univers rabelaisien<sup>21</sup> où *copia* et *nonsense* le disputent à la *felix culpa* dont le but final ne vise à rien d'autre qu'à faire rire et à libérer le royaume de Navarre de ses carcans et de règlements si sévères

qu'ils confinent à l'absurde. Le pédagogue a en outre le tort de recourir à l'empilement de noms ou d'épithètes — trope que Puttenham nomme « congeries » ou « heaping figure<sup>22</sup> ». Il se fourvoie donc parce qu'il en fait trop. De fait, tout dans la comédie grouille, dépasse et déborde, ce qui est sans doute le comble du paradoxe pour une pièce par ailleurs marquée au sceau de l'inachèvement.

La répétition excessive et fautive participe ainsi d'une stratégie d'aveuglement collectif : on parle pour ne pas penser. L'utilisation abusive de « l'envoy » est un bon exemple de ce procédé somme toute assez pathétique. Le mot, d'origine française, n'apparaît pas moins de seize fois dans l'acte III, scène i. Or, Armado se trompe dès le départ (3.1.60) en maintenant l'article français devant « envoy » alors que ce terme avait déjà été absorbé par la langue anglaise et qu'il devrait donc dire, selon toute logique, « *the* envoy ». La définition qu'il en donne est certes intéressante, mais incomplète : « [...] it is an epilogue or discourse to make plain / Some obscure precedence that hath tofore been said » (III.i.69-70).

En 1611, Randle Cotgrave donnera quant à lui une définition beaucoup plus précise de ce terme : « A message, or sending; also, th'Enuoy, or conclusion of a Ballet, or Sonnet; in a short stanza by itselfe, and serving, oftentimes, as a dedication of the whole<sup>23</sup> ». Ce qui frappe dans cette explication, c'est la relation étroite que semble entretenir le terme d'« envoy » avec la danse et la poésie — une relation qui fait sens dans la pièce, mais qu'Armado, pourtant en charge des divertissements de la cour, semble ignorer. Il est à ce titre particulièrement ironique de constater que l'Espagnol mentionne sans le savoir la conclusion d'un ballet dans une comédie où jamais une danse ne connaît le moindre début d'exécution. En somme, la langue sert ici à pallier les déficiences du réel. En outre, en associant

l'idée d'un commencement (« Come, thy l'envoy begin », III.i.60) à celle d'une conclusion, Armado brouille les pistes. Loin de mettre fin à l'histoire de Costard, il lui donne l'occasion de prendre des proportions démesurées <sup>24</sup>. Amoureux du signifiant aux dépens du signifié, le clown décompose en effet les syllabes du discours qu'on lui sert pour réinterpréter chaque réplique à sa guise. Aussi n'entend-il que la seconde syllabe du mot « envoy », c'est à dire « oie », terme alors synonyme de « prostituée », avant de donner libre cours à sa logorrhée. Trace du désordre babélien, le mélange d'anglais et de français qui caractérise certaines des scènes de la pièce rappelle aussi à qui veut l'entendre que, dans la tradition biblique, « la diversité linguistique n'est nécessaire que pour s'adapter au monde de la faute <sup>25</sup> ».

Les lettres fautives qui circulent dans le royaume de Navarre posent précisément le problème de la démesure et du trop-plein que personne ne parvient à réguler. Maria se plaint de la missive, excessivement longue, que lui adresse Longueville, alors même que ce dernier vient de lui offrir des perles. Les quatre jeunes gens écrivent des poèmes qui ne font pas mouche tout simplement parce qu'ils se trompent dans leur manière d'écrire. Ils en font trop, et c'est ce que George Puttenham désigne par le terme de « periergia » qu'il glose par « over-labor » :

Another point of Surplusage lieth not so much in superfluity of you words, as of your travail to describe the matter which ye take in hand, and that ye over-labor yourself in your business. We call it Over-Labor, jump with the original, or rather, the Curious, for his overmuch curiosity and study to show himself fine in a light matter <sup>26</sup>.

Le sonnet du roi (IV.iii.20-36) est un exemple significatif de « periergia », puisque le souverain met tant d'ardeur à sa tâche qu'il écrit à sa dulcinée un poème d'amour pétrarquiste de seize vers là où, habituellement, un sonnet en compte quatorze. Cette pseudo-

perfection constitue le défaut même du sonnet, et loin d'être le dangereux supplément derridien, à la fois addition et substitution<sup>27</sup>, le distique final retranche et efface tout ce que les vers précédents auraient pu avoir de touchant.

Selon Derrida, « [l]e signe est toujours le supplément de la chose même<sup>28</sup> ». Alors que la Princesse et ses suivantes, masquées, viennent d'échanger leurs atours pour mieux berner leurs prétendants, Berowne comprend tout à coup l'erreur de jugement qu'il a commise et qu'il explicite au profit de ses trois amis : « and then we, / Following the signs, wooed but the sign of she » (V.ii.468-469). De prime abord, cette fois, l'erreur des jeunes gens semble pardonnable. Car, en modifiant profondément le concept de supplément et en désolidarisant le signe de la chose, les Françaises ont fait du signe un avatar trompeur, et lui ont retiré sa fonction. Néanmoins, les dames n'ont pas échangé leurs habits : elles n'ont fait qu'échanger les faveurs offertes par les soupirants. On ne peut donc s'empêcher d'être surpris par la naïveté des jeunes hommes, tant les déguisements des dames sont minimaux. En véritables Narcisses, ils ne se sont fiés qu'aux signes, aux objets envoyés par eux-mêmes, oubliant au passage les traits physiques de leurs détentrices. La Princesse, on le sait, est la plus grande des quatre (IV.i.45), Rosaline se distingue par sa peau sombre, Katharine a des cheveux couleur d'ambre (IV.iii.79) : dès lors, comment se tromper sur l'identité des Françaises, même masquées ? Inversement, les jeunes femmes reconnaissent immédiatement leurs soupirants alors que ces derniers sont déguisés de la tête au pied et portent un costume moscovite<sup>29</sup>.

Par certains aspects, ces très lucides demoiselles ressemblent fort aux dames courtisées et raisonnables dépeintes dans les manuels de l'époque, comme celui d'Angel Day, *The English Secretorie* (1586)<sup>30</sup>,

où l'art de séduire l'aimée par voie épistolaire se trouve dûment expliqué. Toutefois, les Françaises, pour se conformer parfaitement aux directives d'Angel Day, devraient normalement réagir par écrit aux poèmes qui leur sont adressés. Une dame courtisée se doit en effet de répondre à l'auteur de la lettre. Or, refusant de rédiger le moindre billet doux, les Françaises se gardent ainsi de céder à la *copia* rhétorique de Navarre pour mieux renvoyer leurs soupirants dans les cordes.

De toute manière, ces amoureux-là manquent singulièrement de sagesse et de lucidité avant même d'écrire la moindre lettre. Ils ont d'emblée choisi la mauvaise voie pour accéder au mariage puisqu'ils croient être capables de se conformer aux idéaux monastiques des « Inns of court », ces écoles de droit londoniennes où toute présence féminine était strictement interdite, même en cuisine. Car comme l'atteste un règlement de Gray's Inn datant de 1581 aucune femme de moins de quarante ans ne pouvait y être employée en qualité de cuisinière ou de blanchisseuse <sup>31</sup>. Signer le pacte de Ferdinand, telle est donc l'erreur suprême commise par des jeunes gens pleins de fougue dans ce qui ressemble à une version grotesque du pacte faustien au cours duquel le personnage-titre, sceptique aiguillonné par la sensualité et les plaisirs du monde, lègue son âme à Lucifer <sup>32</sup>. La réticence de Berowne rappelle ainsi, par certains aspects, la réticence de Faust lui-même, et Berowne, tout comme Faust, finira par se laisser convaincre. Mais à l'inverse du protagoniste tragique de Marlowe, il aura le choix du parjure.

### 3. « Most maculate thoughts » (I.ii.76) : l'erreur transgressive



À bien y réfléchir, le parjure n'est pas l'apanage des lords. Songeons au document dont la Princesse rappelle l'existence à Ferdinand pour lui prouver que l'Aquitaine doit revenir à la France. Le document en question, ou « acquittance » (II.i.157), est promis pour le lendemain... Or, jamais on ne verra la moindre preuve juridique entre les mains de la princesse. On est là, une nouvelle fois, dans le principe de désir, où l'attente se substitue à la réalité et la frustration au plaisir.

La Princesse n'est donc pas toute blanche. Qui plus est, bien que prétendument vierges, ces demoiselles ne manquent jamais l'occasion de faire un sous-entendu grivois, et nombreux sont les critiques qui ont souligné le caractère éminemment transgressif de la langue de cette comédie où obscénité et scatologie font bon ménage. Les objets poétiques traditionnels se voient détournés à des fins licencieuses. L'œil, au cœur de la poésie pétrarquiste, prend ainsi dans *Peines d'amour perdues* des connotations ouvertement érotiques. En témoigne la scène de la rencontre des « lords » et des « ladies » au sein du royaume de Navarre, où l'antanaclase audacieuse sur les homophones « eye » et « ay » semble parfaitement délibérée :

ROSALINE. My physic says 'ay'.  
BEROWNE. Will you prick't with your eye?  
(II.i.184-85)

De toute évidence, Berowne feint de mal comprendre ce que lui dit son interlocutrice de sorte que le sentiment amoureux suscité par cette dernière prend ici un tour purement charnel. Pour Shakespeare, comme pour Bataille<sup>33</sup>, l'œil accomplit en fin de compte la fonction érotique de la vision.

Les personnages se trompent tous plus ou moins à dessein dans l'utilisation d'un mot ou d'une expression afin de pouvoir dissimuler des propos osés derrière la façade d'une naïveté de bon aloi. Souvent commentée, la scène de la chasse est un modèle de transgression

langagière<sup>34</sup>. Mais attachons-nous plutôt à celui par qui la transgression arrive : Costard, l'avatar du « trickster » élisabéthain dans la pièce. Alors qu'il est sur le point d'aller en prison, Moth s'exclame : « Come, you transgressing slave, away ! » (1.2.126). Or, dans l'Angleterre élisabéthaine, la transgression n'est rien d'autre qu'une erreur au sens large du terme comme l'explique Randle Cotgrave dans son dictionnaire Français / Anglais :

Erreur: f.

An error, ouersight, ouerslip, mistaking; an ignorance, or false opinion; a wandering, or straying out of the right way; also, a misse, fault, offence, transgression; [...] <sup>35</sup>.

Costard étant la transgression faite homme, on comprend difficilement la raison pour laquelle Berowne (III.i.147) et Armado (III.i.114) le choisissent comme messager, d'autant que le clown ne dissimule pas sa malice. On a souvent dit que Costard commettait des erreurs du fait de son incompetence, mais on ne s'est pas suffisamment demandé s'il ne remettait pas sciemment le courrier du cœur qu'on lui confie à la mauvaise personne<sup>36</sup>. Car c'est un excellent moyen, pour lui de prendre l'ascendant sur son rival Armado tout en achevant de le ridiculiser aux yeux de la cour. D'ailleurs, sa première erreur de distribution devrait l'amener à rectifier le tir et à donner la seconde missive à la bonne destinataire, mais il n'en fait rien. Un constat s'impose donc ici : transgresser les ordres donnés par les auteurs des lettres, c'est pour Costard une manière d'acquérir le pouvoir que son statut social ne lui accorde pas d'emblée.

L'erreur, dans *Peines d'amour perdues*, se décline par conséquent sous toutes ses formes, et si elle est parfois commise par ignorance ou par excès de zèle, elle est aussi délibérée et ouvertement transgressive. Rien d'étonnant à cela dans une pièce placée sous le signe de

Cupidon, l'enfant espiègle incarné ici par le malicieux Moth. Qualifié de « tender Juvenall » (I.ii.10) dans la pièce, le page est par ailleurs créé à l'image de Thomas Nashe<sup>37</sup>, l'Arétin anglais jamais à court d'écrits licencieux et pornographiques<sup>38</sup>. Les mots du bien-nommé Moth / Cupidon sont ainsi autant de flèches qu'il lance avec justesse en plein cœur de ses cibles. Dans sa *Mythologie* initialement publiée à Venise en 1567, Natale Conti attribue des pouvoirs phénoménaux au dieu de l'amour : « [...] ce qui estoit laid & difforme, il le faisoit trouver beau & honneste<sup>39</sup> ». Le très catholique Armado décide ainsi d'épouser Jaquenetta sans bien savoir si elle est « honneste ». Les jeunes nobles sont tout aussi aveuglés par l'amour. Esthète narcissique, Berowne s'éprend d'une jeune femme à la peau sombre alors que les canons de beauté de l'époque vantent la blondeur et le teint incarnat. Katharine peut bien avoir le visage vérolé (c'est-à-dire « full of O's », V.ii.45), Dumaine tombe fou amoureux d'elle. Maria est issue de la lignée douteuse des Falconbridge, que Shakespeare exploite dans *Le roi Jean*, mais Longaville n'y voit que du feu. Quant à la Princesse, bien que sa visite soit explicitement motivée par la diplomatie et l'appât du gain, elle plaît à Ferdinand sans même avoir besoin de le séduire. En somme, Cupidon fait surgir le sentiment amoureux de situations incongrues, à mille lieues des sages et ennuyeux principes couchés noir sur blanc dans les pages des manuels de conduite en vogue à l'époque. Dans son traité de mythologie, Conti précise d'ailleurs qu'Amour aurait été engendré par le chaos : « Il semble qu'Hesiodé en sa Theogonie vueille dire qu'Amour ou Cupidon soit issu de cette antique matiere informe, lourde, obscure, pesante & immobile, qu'on a nommée Chaos [...] <sup>40</sup> ». Cette « matière informe, lourde, obscure » et « pesante », c'est bien celle qui domine dans le royaume du roi Ferdinand — et qui est faite de l'étoffe même des songes.

L'étoffe de la Navarre shakespearienne est en effet tissée de non-dits, de fantasmes et d'erreurs. En somme, il y fait nuit en plein jour. Cette forme d'aveuglement est propice à la folie comme au renversement des conventions. Aussi les erreurs de registre des Françaises, clairement intentionnelles, sont-elles destinées à choquer. Même Costard, pourtant prompt à la plaisanterie grivoise, semble abasourdi par leur vulgarité : « O my troth most sweete jests, most inconie vulgar wit » (IV.i.135), s'exclame-t-il à l'issue de la scène de la chasse<sup>41</sup>. Ici, c'est le terme argotique d'« inconie » qui retient l'attention du spectateur. L'OED note une seule occurrence précédant celle de *Peine d'amour perdues*, qui se trouve dans *The Jew of Malta*, de Christopher Marlowe où ce dernier joue sur la proximité phonétique d'« incony » et de « coney<sup>42</sup> ». Il en va de même pour Shakespeare, qui utilise cet adjectif pour ses connotations obscènes. Ainsi, l'« inconie wit » de Maria ne désigne pas seulement son esprit subtil, mais aussi son « con » qui se trouve donc ici doublement désigné<sup>43</sup>. Voilà qui surprend d'autant plus le clown que la demoiselle, dont le prénom renvoie sans doute par erreur (ou par ironie) à la pureté virginale, se montre ouvertement grivoise.

Néanmoins, si Maria commet l'erreur de choquer un homme qui ne se privera sûrement pas de répéter ce qu'il a entendu, elle prend des risques calculés. Comme le prouve un dénouement en forme de pirouette, la belle n'a nulle envie de se marier, de sorte que repousser d'hypothétiques prétendants fait partie d'une habile stratégie de défense. Plus généralement, les quatre jeunes femmes choisissent toutes, à un moment ou à un autre, de transgresser les codes de la bienséance qui menace de les étouffer. Mais à force de détourner ces codes, elles ne sont plus capables de les lire correctement. Aussi se trompent-elles lourdement sur les intentions

de leurs prétendants, malgré les signaux envoyés par ces derniers <sup>44</sup>

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Les billets doux de Navarre et de ses amis ont été pris pour de vulgaires farces. À cela, deux explications : soit les jeunes femmes ont mal interprété à dessein les lettres qui leur étaient destinées pour échapper au mariage (mais alors, éconduire directement les prétendants eût été chose aisée), soit elles n'ont pas su lire entre les lignes maladroites de leurs amants putatifs. Admettons. Les jeunes Françaises ne seraient donc guère plus lucides que leurs prétendants. La future reine de France pourra-t-elle, dans ces conditions, comprendre son peuple et servir les intérêts de son pays ? On peut en douter.

Si la question du pouvoir et de sa fragilité taraude tant Shakespeare, c'est parce que l'autorité humaine est généralement défaillante. Provocation ou pure comédie ? Dans la pièce, les agents du pouvoir sont essentiellement catholiques puisque l'autorité revient à la Princesse et à ses amies, qui sont françaises. Au-delà de ces ambassadrices de charme, celui qui incarne le mieux le catholicisme fautif moqué par les Anglais, c'est le « magnifique Armado » (I.i.188) <sup>45</sup>, personnage fantasque venu d'Espagne, contrée alors dirigée par un membre de la dynastie des Habsbourg, le roi Philippe II (1527-1598), qui soutenait en France les forces catholiques de la Ligue qui combattaient Henri IV. Apparemment bien inoffensif, l'Espagnol raffole d'autant plus des bons mots de son page que lui-même en est incapable. Aussi s'extasie-t-il lorsque son serviteur entreprend d'enseigner l'alphabet à Holofernes pour mieux ridiculiser ce dernier :

MOTH. The last of the five vowels, if 'you' repeat them; or the fifth, if 'I'.

HOLOFERNES. I will repeat them: a, e, I —

MOTH. The sheep. The other two concludes it: o, u.

ARMADO. Now by the salt wave of the Mediterraneum, a sweet touch, a quick  
venue of wit!  
(V.i.45-50)

D'une part, on comprend ici que le matamore se réjouit de la plaisanterie de Moth qui vient de faire dire à Holofernes qu'il est un mouton (« I / The sheep »). De l'autre, s'il complimente la vigueur intellectuelle de son page, c'est peut-être aussi parce qu'il identifie immédiatement le message subliminal divulgué par petit serviteur qui vient de réciter les voyelles dans l'ordre : a, e, i, o, u. À l'époque de Shakespeare en effet, AEIOU est l'acrostiche latin de la devise des Habsbourg (« Austriae Est Imperare Orbi Universo <sup>46</sup> »), éminente puissance catholique qui régnait alors sur une grande partie de l'Europe.

On voit que, derrière l'incompréhension, les quiproquos, les plaisanteries et les jeux de mots grivois, la menace de l'Autre est bel et bien présente dans cette comédie grinçante, où quelques voyelles *a priori* insignifiantes servent à signaler la montée en puissance d'une force politique et religieuse que l'Angleterre protestante n'aura dès lors de cesse de combattre au cours des décennies suivantes. S'il est évidemment hors de question de trouver un sens à tous les jeux de lettres shakespeariens, l'interprétation est ici si tentante que la peur de l'erreur ne saurait véritablement la mettre à mal...

## Envoy : éloge de la *delectatio morosa*

Si *Peines d'amour perdues* semble éprouver quelque jubilation à ne tenir aucun compte du traditionnel adage latin qui trouve diabolique de persévérer dans l'erreur, la comédie fait en revanche flèche de toute infraction en se jouant des (in)certitudes du langage. Force est de constater qu'au sein du royaume de Ferdinand, il est impossible

de prendre pour argent comptant ce que disent les personnages : leurs paroles se retournent aisément, et leur envers n'est souvent guère reluisant. Shakespeare nous invite ainsi à pénétrer dans un royaume où le scepticisme est roi et s'articule à une foi vacillante car, comme l'erreur, le doute libère.

Curieusement, alors que le dénouement approche, l'erreur persiste dans les actes et les décisions des personnages. Alors qu'ils sont les premiers à cultiver l'erreur à leur insu, la jouissance qu'ils éprouvent à la pourfendre montre bien la fascination qu'elle exerce sur le monde. Jamais on ne se lasse de repérer l'erreur tant la *delectatio morosa* nous pousse à jouir de la faute<sup>47</sup>. Qui s'intéresserait à un personnage parfait ou à une œuvre dépourvue de faiblesses ? L'erreur est sans aucun doute la meilleure manière de devenir célèbre, et les gentilshommes l'apprennent rapidement à leurs dépens.

Il faut dire que, dans le royaume de Navarre, se tromper c'est vivre. Autre façon de dire que la perfection n'est pas de ce monde et si, en anglais, l'erreur est souvent signalée par le préfixe « miss », une ultime pirouette nous permettrait d'affirmer que, d'une certaine manière, *Peines d'amour perdues* est bel et bien une comédie mettant les « mis(s) » à l'honneur. Néanmoins, je terminerai mon « envoy » sur une réflexion plus personnelle. Et si la plus grave erreur des jeunes hommes n'était pas, finalement, de croire que les demoiselles de France veulent vraiment être courtisées et qu'eux-mêmes sont réellement capables de s'offrir à elles ? Bien avant Lacan, Shakespeare semble avoir compris que l'amour, c'est « donner ce qu'on n'a pas à quelqu'un qui n'en veut pas<sup>48</sup> ». Immatures, les gentilshommes semblent ne chérir que l'idée même de l'amour. Quant à la Princesse, jeune cynique en herbe, elle possède des raisons purement diplomatiques de vouloir plaire au roi de Navarre.

Reste donc, pour Ferdinand et ses amis, ce qu'on nomme en anglais le « male-bonding », une solidarité et une affection toute masculine qui, loin des femmes savantes, serait vraiment à même de promouvoir une philosophie de l'errance et du tâtonnement.

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## NOTES

1. Voir la définition du terme donnée par l'OED : « 1a. Law. A wrongful act or omission; spec. a misdemeanour or failure of duty by a public official. [...] b. More generally: the mistaking of one thing for another; a misunderstanding; a mistake. »
2. Voir ce que dit Berowne au cours du dernier acte : « We to ourselves prove false / By being once false, for ever to be true », V.ii.746-747. Les citations de *Peines d'amour perdues* sont tirées de l'édition de William C. Carroll (voir bibliographie).
3. François Rigolot, *L'erreur de la Renaissance*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2002, p. 205. Au chapitre VI (« Erreurs et rhétorique ») de son ouvrage, Rigolot explique qu'Horace, dans l'*Ars poetica*, « avait osé parler des charmes des *maculae* ('fautes poétiques') qui sont le fruit d'une agréable *incuria* ('négligence'). »
4. Don Adriano de Armado, chevalier *ab-errant*, est le premier à prononcer ce mot apparemment tabou dans la comédie. Lorsque Holofernes décide confier le rôle d'Hercule à Moth, l'Espagnol s'exclame : « Pardon, sir, error! He is not quantity enough for the Worthy's thumb » (V.i.105-106). Il sera relayé par Berowne qui, venant d'être humilié par les Françaises au cours du bal des Moscovites, fait rimer « error » avec « terror » : « Now, to our perjury to add more terror, / We are again forsworn in will and error » (V.ii.470-471). Enfin, le même Berowne cherchera à se dédouaner partiellement de ses erreurs, commises au nom de l'amour, et en fera incomber partiellement la cause aux jeunes Françaises : « [...] Therefore, ladies, / Our love being yours, the error that love makes / Is likewise yours. [...] » (V.ii.744-746).

5. Il suffit en effet de se rappeler l'épître dédicatoire de John Florio dans sa traduction des *Essais* de Montaigne, dédiée à six femmes de la famille Bedford-Harington : « French hath long time beene termed the language of Ladies: So doth it grace your tongues; so doe your tongues grace it; as if written by men it may have a good garbe, spoken by you it hath a double grace: for so I have heard some of you speake it, as no man, few women, could come near their sweete-relish ayre of it ». Cité dans Juliet Fleming, « Dictionary English and the Female Tongue » in *Privileging Gender in Early Modern England*, éd. Jean R. Brink, *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies*, vol. 23, Kirksville, MO, Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1993, p. 188.

6. *Ibid.* Selon Juliet Fleming, « Florio's assertion that women make the best vernacular speakers had been inherited by the English humanists from Cicero ». Dans un passage extrait de Cicéron, *De Oratore*, Livre III, 44-46 (trad. H Rackham, Cambridge, Loeb Classical Library, 1982, p. 37), Crassus affirme en effet que les femmes préservent la pureté du Latin en le prononçant correctement.

7. Sur cette confusion répétée dans l'in-quarto puis dans l'in-folio, voir Oscar J. Campbell, « *Love's Labour's Lost* Restudied (1925) » in *Love's Labour's Lost. Critical Essays*, éd. Felicia Hardison Londré, New York, Routledge, 2001, p. 86 : « In the first quarto she is called 'queen' a number of times; and many of these designations are retained in the folio edition ». Campbell en conclut que cette désignation n'est pas une erreur et qu'on peut voir dans la Princesse un double dramatique de Marguerite de Valois qui, après s'être rendue à Nérac en 1578, trouva la cour de Navarre parfaitement à son goût.

8. William Shakespeare, *Peines d'amour perdues* dans *Comédies*, I, in *Œuvres complètes*, V, éd. Jean-Michel Déprats et Gisèle Venet, Paris, Gallimard, 2013, p. 715.

9. Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes*, éd. John Manning, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1989, p. 76 : « Heare Hanno standes, and looks into the skye, / And feedes him selfe, with hope of future praise: / Unto his birdes, he dothe his eare applie, / And trustes in tyme, that they his name should raise: / For they weare taught, before they flewe abrode, / Longe tyme to saie, that HANNO was a God. // But, when the birdes from bondage were releast, / And in the woodes, with other birdes weare join'de, / Then HANNOS name, their wonted lesson ceaste, / For eache did singe, according to his kinde: / Then flee his faulte. Ambition works our shame, / And virtue love, which dothe extol our name ». L'emblème est également accessible sur le site Internet <http://www.mun.ca/alciato/wcomm.html> (consulté le 18 mars 2015).

10. Voir la Bible, Genèse 1 : 26. Dans la *King James Bible* (1611), il est écrit : « And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth ». Voir le site <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Genesis-1-26/> (consulté le 18 mars 2015).

11. Dans son essai de 1944, « Sur une philosophie de l'expression », paru dans « Poésie 44 » et portant sur les travaux de Brice Parain consacrés au langage, Albert Camus résumait ainsi l'idée profonde du philosophe. Albert Camus, *Œuvres complètes*, tome I, éd. Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi, Gallimard, coll. La Pléiade, 2006, p. 908.
12. William Shakespeare, *Peines d'amour perdues* dans *Comédies*, I, in *Œuvres complètes*, V, ed. cit., p. 793.
13. Voir Alison Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, Londres, Methuen Drama, Bloomsbury, The Arden Shakespeare, 2010, p. 163.
14. L'attitude affectée d'Armado l'empêche par ailleurs d'être pris au sérieux par les autres : la *gravitas* propre à la cour lui fait défaut. Voir Graham Holderness, Nick Potter et John Turner, *Shakespeare: Out of Court*, Londres, Macmillan, 1990, p. 28.
15. Sur ce point, voir John Palsgrave, *L'éclaircissement de la langue française*, Londres, 1530, 214/1, « Disshecloute, souillon ». Voir aussi ce que dit la nourrice de Roméo dans William Shakespeare, *Roméo et Juliette*, III.v.219 : « Romeo's a dishclout to him (Paris) ».
16. Alors qu'il s'efforce de justifier la présence d'un page minuscule endossant le rôle d'Hercule, il croit sauver la face en mentionnant l'épisode où le héros, encore simple nourrisson, étrangle dans son berceau les serpents envoyés par Junon. Ce faisant, Holofernes ne suscite qu'une image scénique grotesque qui ne fait que souligner un peu plus l'incongruité de la distribution artistique de la pièce dans la pièce.
17. Comme l'a montré Antoine Compagnon, « [m]ultiplier les *sententiae*, recouvrir son discours d'yeux, de perspectives diverses et divergentes, c'est se défendre contre le regard de l'autre, mais c'est aussi s'exposer : faire de son discours un monstre, Argus qui surveille toutes les issues. '*Sed neque oculos esse toto corpore velim, ne caetera membra officium suum perdant*'. Il ne faut pas que le discours soit couvert d'yeux, au risque que les autres membres de son corps soient mutilés : le corps merveilleux du discours doit être conforme aux canons de l'anatomie humaine, fidèle aux proportions du corps de l'orateur. » Antoine Compagnon, *La seconde main ou le travail de la citation*, Paris, Seuil, 1979, p. 146.
18. La version consultée dans le cadre de cet article est celle de 1603. Voir G. De la Mothe, *The French alphabeth: teaching in a very short tyme, by a most easie way, to pronounce French naturally, to reade it perfectly, to write it truely, and to speake it accordingly. Together with The treasure of the French tongue, conteyning the rarest sentences, prouerbes, parables, similies, apothegmes and golden sayings of the most excellent French authours, as vvell poets as orators. The one diligently compiled, and the other painfully gathered and set in order, after the alphabeticall maner, for the benefite of those that are desirous of the French-tongue*, Londres, 1603, STC n° 6547.
19. Gilles (ou Georges) De la Mothe, actif en Angleterre à partir des années 1592, fut le tuteur du fils de Henry Wallop (Lord Chief Justice en Irlande). Il entra ensuite au service de la famille Wenman, dans l'Oxfordshire, avant d'abandonner le tutorat en 1595 pour rejoindre les enseignants français qui officiaient alors à St Paul's Churchyard. Voir Douglas

A. Kibbee, *For to Speke Frenche Trewely. The French language in England, 1000-1600. Its status, description and instruction*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, *Studies in the History of the Language Sciences* 60, 1991, p. 193.

20. G. De la Mothe, *The French alphabeth*, ed. cit., p. 82 : « The sweetnesse and facilitie of a tounge consisteth in the multitude of vowels [...]. So that the tounge, wherein vowels exceede the number of consonantes, as the Greeke and Latin tounge, and other their like, are much more sweeter to be pronounced, and pleasant to be heard, than those wherein for a vowel there is always three or foure consonants [...] That is the cause wherefore there be so many consonants in the French tounge which are not pronounced [...]. »

21. Dans *Gargantua*, le précepteur Thubal Holoferne apprend à Gargantua à réciter l'alphabet à l'envers.

22. George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy* (1589), éd. Frank Whigham et Wayne A. Rebhorn, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2007, p. 321 : « the Latines called it Congeries and we the heaping figure, as he that said To muse in minde how faire, how wise, how good, How brave, how free, how curteous and how true [...]. »

23. Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (Londres, 1611), facs., éd. William S. Woods, Columbia, The University of South Carolina Press, 1950. L'OED (1.a) définit comme suit ce mot, dont la première occurrence remonterait à Chaucer (c1398) : « a. The action of sending forth a poem; hence, the concluding part of a poetical or prose composition; the author's parting words; a dedication, postscript. Now chiefly the short stanza which concludes a poem written in certain archaic metrical forms. *arch.* ».

24. Se moquant de l'un des poèmes affectés de Gabriel Harvey, à savoir « Gorgon » (soustitré « The Wonderful Year »), extrait de *Supererogation* (1593), Thomas Nashe en compare « Lenvoy » à un « fart after a good stool », ce qui en dit assez long sur la qualité littéraire du poème en question (ou sur la médisance de Nashe). On comprend dès lors que le clown associe en premier lieu « l'envoy » à l'administration annale d'un purgatif, avant d'entendre en lui le son « oi ». Voir à ce propos Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 60.

25. Myriam Jacquemier, « Du désordre babélien à la conscience de l'altérité » in *Ordre et désordre dans la civilisation de la Renaissance*, Saint-Étienne, Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 1996, p. 128, note 30 (123-138).

26. George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, ed. cit., p. 344.

27. Voici comment Derrida définit le supplément : « [...] le concept de supplément [...] abrite en lui deux significations dont la cohabitation est aussi étrange que nécessaire. Le supplément s'ajoute, il est un surplus, une plénitude enrichissant une autre plénitude, le comble de la présence. Il cumule et accumule la présence. C'est ainsi que l'art, la *technè*, l'image, la représentation, la convention, etc., viennent en supplément de la nature et sont riches de toute cette fonction de cumul. [...] Mais le supplément supplée. Il ne s'ajoute que

pour remplacer. Il intervient ou s'insinue *à-la-place-de* ; s'il comble, c'est comme on comble un vide. S'il représente et fait image, c'est par le défaut antérieur d'une présence. Suppléant et vicaire, le supplément est un adjoint, une instance subalterne qui *tient-lieu*. En tant que substitut, il ne s'ajoute pas simplement à la positivité d'une présence, il ne produit aucun relief, sa place est assignée dans la structure par la marque d'un vide. Quelque part, quelque chose ne peut se remplir *de soi-même*, ne peut s'accomplir qu'en se laissant combler par signe et procuration. » Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, II, 2, Paris, éditions de Minuit, 1967, p. 208.

**28.** *Ibid.*

**29.** Voir Madhavi Menon, « The L Words » in *Shakesqueer: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Madhavi Menon, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2011, p. 190. Chez les hommes, majoritairement essentialistes, le signifié a mené au signifiant, tandis que les jeunes femmes, plutôt nominalistes, ont été capables de rompre le lien existant entre les deux.

**30.** Angel Day, *The English Secretorie*, Londres, imprimé par Robert Walde-graue, 1586, STC n° 6401.

**31.** Andrew Gurr, « Professional Playing in London and Superior Cambridge Responses » in *Shakespeare Studies*, vol. XXXVII, éd. Susan Zimmerman et Garrett Sullivan, Madison, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, p. 44.

**32.** Christopher Marlowe, *Le Docteur Faustus / Doctor Faustus*, éd. François Laroque, traduction inédite par François Laroque et Jean-Pierre Villquin, Paris, GF Flammarion, 1997, p. 96, II.ii.89-90 : « Then Mephistopheles, receive this scroll, / A deed of gift of body and soul— ».

**33.** Georges Bataille, *Histoire de l'œil* (1928), Paris, Gallimard, 1993. Comme l'explique Philippe Sabot, « pour Bataille (...), l'extase naît (...) de la conversion du regard aux choses d'en bas, à ces mouvements les plus obscurs de l'existence qui, au lieu du simple dégoût ou de la honte, provoquent aussi bien le rire que l'angoisse. Or, l'œil représente et matérialise justement ce point de passage et d'inversion du haut et du bas, de l'honnête et de l'obscène ». Philippe Sabot, « Extase et transgression chez Georges Bataille », *Savoir et Clinique*, 2007/1, n° 8, p. 87-93, paragraphe 13. Voir le site : [http://www.cairn.info/zen.php?ID\\_ARTICLE=SC\\_008\\_0087](http://www.cairn.info/zen.php?ID_ARTICLE=SC_008_0087) (consulté le 2 février 2015).

**34.** Un exemple suffira à illustrer nos propos. Boyet, voulant prendre congé, s'exclame : « I fear too much rubbing. Good night, my good owl » (IV.i.132). À l'issue d'une scène qui donne lieu à de multiples sous-entendus sur les bêtes à cornes à et maints jeux de mots grivois, on est en droit de se demander si « rubbing » ne se rapporte vraiment qu'au jeu de boules mentionné par le clown, (qui pense que Maria, trop forte au tir à l'arc, pourrait être vaincue sur un autre terrain), ou si le mot n'évoque pas plutôt la masturbation. Dans un tel contexte, le mot « owl » pourrait bien renvoyer à « hole », au sexe féminin.

**35.** Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*, ed. cit.

36. Voir à ce sujet Kara Northway, « Costard's Revenge: Letters and their Misdelivery in *Love's Labour's Lost* » in *Renaissance Papers 2011*, éd. Andrew Shifflett et Edward Gieskes, Camden House, New York, 2012, p. 17-30.
37. Pour mémoire, Robert Greene s'adresse à Thomas Nashe en le qualifiant de « young Juvenall » dans *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* (1592). Voir Robert Greene, *The Life and Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene*. 15 vols. Ed. Alexander B. Grosart, Londres, Huth Library, 1881-86, vol. 12, p. 143.
38. Sur Nashe perçu comme un « self-styled English Aretino », voir David O. Frantz, *Festum Voluptatis. A Study of Renaissance Erotica*, Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1989, p. 188. Voir aussi David C. McPherson, « Aretino and the Harvey-Nashe Quarrel », *PMLA*, Vol. 84, No. 6 (Oct., 1969) : 1551-58.
39. Natale Conti, *Mythologie c'est à dire, Explication des Fables contenant les genealogies*, Lyon, 1600, « De Cupidon », p. 397.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 394.
41. Au cours de l'acte 3, alors que Costard vient d'obtenir une « rémunération » d'Armado qui lui a confié sa lettre pour Jaquenetta, il décrit déjà son bienfaiteur comme « My sweete ounce of mans flesh, my [in-conie] Jew ! » (3.1.118).
42. Une ressemblance qu'il exploite aussi dans sa traduction des *Élégies* d'Ovide (I.x). Selon David Crystal, « [incony] probably related to *cony*, 'rabbit', which developed as a term of male-to-female endearment. It was pronounced 'cunny', rhyming with *money* and *honey*, and this pronunciation inevitably gave it an indecent association, which was also current around 1600 ». Voir David Crystal, *'Think on my Words'. Exploring Shakespeare's Language*, Cambridge, CUP, 2008, p. 169.
43. Chez Shakespeare, le mot « wit », dérivé du français « vit », peut en effet désigner les organes sexuels masculin et féminin. Voir par exemple William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, éd. Alan Brissenden, Oxford, OUP, 1998, Appendix A, p. 231.
44. « We did not quote them so », rétorque ainsi Rosaline à Longaville (V.ii.760).
45. William Shakespeare, *Peines d'amour perdues* dans *Comédies*, I, in *Œuvres complètes*, V, ed. cit., p. 626.
46. À l'origine, il s'agit de la devise de Frédéric III signifiant « Le monde entier sera sous le commandement de l'Autriche ». Voir Benjamin Curtis, *The Habsburgs: The History of a Dynasty*, London, Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 1.
47. François Rigolot, *L'erreur de la Renaissance*, ed. cit., p. 364.
48. Jacques Lacan, « Le séminaire livre XII, Les problèmes cruciaux pour la psychanalyse », 1964-1965 – 17 mars 1965. Non publié.
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# RÉSUMÉS

Comédie de la *copia* et de l'ignorance, *Peines d'amour perdues* est une œuvre riche en approximations, faisant ainsi la part belle à l'erreur, même si le mot lui-même n'y est que fort peu employé, n'apparaissant paradoxalement que dans le dernier acte qui devrait être celui de la résolution plutôt que de la confusion. Au cœur d'une Navarre shakespearienne rongée par l'illusion et l'incertitude, l'erreur renvoie au péché originel et à ce *serio ludere* si prisé par les humanistes de la Renaissance. Ainsi, le dramaturge n'a de cesse de transformer fautes, faiblesses et fourvoiements en créations langagières mettant l'erreur à l'honneur pour mieux la transfigurer sur le plan dramatique. Mais, derrière pareille virtuosité et une apparente légèreté, l'erreur, dans la pièce, ne servirait-elle pas aussi à mettre en avant les failles et les fragilités de l'humanité ? Cet article s'interrogera donc sur le véritable statut de l'erreur dans cette comédie discordante et sur la manière dont Shakespeare, animé par un scepticisme aussi profond que joyeux, s'amuse à en subvertir puis à en réécrire la ou les définition(s).

As a comedy devoted to *copia* and ignorance, *Love's Labour's Lost* is full of shortcomings and approximations. It thus sheds light on its numerous errors, even though the word "error" seldom crops up in the text and is only mentioned in the last act of the play – something of a paradox, since act V normally provides a form of resolution rather than confusion. At the heart of a Shakespearean Navarre dominated by illusion and uncertainty, error is linked to the original sin and to the *serio ludere* tradition so much praised by the Renaissance Humanists. The playwright turns weaknesses, errors and misprision into linguistic creations that serve to enhance error through some sort of dramatic transfiguration. Yet, beyond the play's verbal virtuosity and apparent lightness, one can wonder whether all the errors in the play do not also serve to emphasize the defects and weaknesses of mankind. This article will thus analyse the real status of error in Shakespeare's jarring comedy by examining how the playwright, in a deep but merry form of scepticism, joyfully subverts and rewrites the usual definition(s) of error.

# INDEX

**Mots-clés** : erreur, ignorance, excès, transgression, chaos, *felix culpa*, *periergia*, scepticisme

**Keywords** : error, ignorance, excess, transgression, chaos, *felix culpa*, *periergia*, scepticism



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# “ To teach a teacher ill beseemeth me” ( II .i.107): The Dynamics of Teaching and Learning in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*

Delphine Lemonnier-Textier

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The thematisation of teaching in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* , as in *The Taming of the Shrew* , can probably be seen as a direct result of Shakespeare’s use of figures from the Italian comic tradition of the *commedia dell’arte* , and in particular the figure of the doctor or pedant; but it can also be traced back to a general trend, in the last quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in which schoolmasters were satirized in a number of plays <sup>1</sup> .

The gendered nature of Shakespeare’s treatment of the theme in both comedies – female pupil and a male teacher – hinges upon the realities of the stage and the acting profession in Elizabethan England, in which boy actors having entered apprenticeship aged 11 or 12 for a standard duration of seven years progressively moved from playing short parts in their early days as apprentices (such as pages or minor female characters) to longer, more complex parts (eg. the major female parts) demonstrating skills acquired under the guidance of a senior actor.

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Petruccio teaches Kate to pretend the sun is the moon and an old man is a fresh-faced maid; in *Love's Labour's Lost*, the most scathing lesson the four women teach the four men is by outdoing their pageant. In other words, the lessons presented in the two plays are primarily lessons in the art of acting which playfully and effectively reverse the hierarchy between professional actors and their apprentices on stage, as well as the hierarchy between the sexes in the worlds of the plays.

In *Love's Labour's Lost*, a play “where a braggart cannot count to three nor even a king to five”, as Cynthia Lewis notes <sup>2</sup>, two types of “schools” co-exist. On the one hand, the play shows the sterile, narcissistic school of Navarre's Academe, where all the men are in love with the sound of their own voices <sup>3</sup>, resulting in hollow if poetically effective exchanges merely echoing one another's ideas. These men's so-called knowledge is grotesquely amplified in the figure of Armado the braggart soldier and pitiful lover, and their pathetic attempt at theatrical performance is mirrored and amplified in the pageant of the Nine Worthies put on by the satirical schoolmaster figure, Holofernes, and his acolytes.

Contrasting with this all-male world, the Princess of France and her ladies stand as foils for the arrogant ignorance and inflated self-esteem of the men and constitute an informal alternative “school” of sorts based on qualities that the men lack, among which self-knowledge, humility and common sense. In a world where – just as in Renaissance England – “the mutual imbrication of language and sexuality looms large <sup>4</sup>”, the confrontation between the two highlights the static and potentially regressive nature of the men's “learning” which, among other things, is “preposterous” – to take up Patricia Parker's enlightening analysis <sup>5</sup> – and causes the freezing of language in matter, while the women's lessons provide the play

with a much needed dynamics reinvigorating language and opening perspectives for the possibility of comic catharsis.

## The flawed academy of Navarre: the men's misuse of language and its consequences

Fame-hungry, narcissistic men: the caricature of a spiritual war

The opening scene of the play clearly demonstrates the flawed school, or “Academe” as he calls it, of the King of Navarre (i.i.13) both in the statutes of the edict and in the very fabric of the dialogue. The scene is saturated with the Christian vocabulary of spiritual warfare, only it is placed under a quest for fame, not virtue. Similarly, the paradoxical statement joining the contemplative and the active parts of philosophy highlights Navarre's confusion, as Rolf Soellner has shown, concluding that Ferdinand's confusion of basic philosophic terminology is symptomatic of his ignorance of the goals of both moral philosophy and Christian warfare. In seeking glory through establishing an academy of warriors of the spirit, Ferdinand violates these goals <sup>6</sup>.

The poetic fabric of the dialogue is the second element that highlights the flaws of Navarre's school. He and his men are infatuated with the sound of their own voices. As they echo Navarre's principles, the musicality of their lines rapidly supersedes the assertion of moral principles. Berowne uses the same phrase at regular intervals “Which I hope well is not enrolled here” (38), “The which I hope is not enrolled here” (41), “Which I hope well is not enrolled there” (46) like some sort of refrain the affectation of which is increased by the stress on ‘enrollèd’ which is normally left unstressed. Halfway through his cue, identical rhymes appear

("night/night", 42, 44; "day/day", 43-45), and he concludes with a rhyming couplet (47-48). The next rhyme is shared between the King and Berowne ("these/please", 49-50), as is the rhyming couplet started by Longaville and finished by Berowne ("rest/jest", 53-54), a process which becomes systematic, so that Berowne's following long cue is entirely rhymed, as are almost all the lines spoken in the rest of the scene.

Shakespeare highlights these so-called scholars' inability to know themselves well enough to identify their own flaws by ironically having the King characterize in Armado the very flaw of self-infatuation demonstrated in the scene by the four men themselves:

One who the music of his own vain tongue  
Doth ravish like enchanting harmony (I.i 164-165)

## The caricature of a soldier, trapped in the substance of words

Engaged in a pseudo-spiritual war in their academy, Navarre and his men differ only in degree but not in nature from the play's only professional soldier, Armado, whom Moth claims is also a "negligent student" in the art of love (III.i.29), just as Navarre and his men will be when they embark upon the wars of love in an ironic twist of fate which reveals how easily they pervert their ideals of knowledge and wisdom. If Moth's wittily mocking remarks are anything to go by, they seem to point out the extent to which his master tends to lose himself in the substance of words:

jig off a tune at the tongue's end, canary it with your feet, humour it with turning up your eyelids, sigh a note and sing a note, sometime through the throat as if you swallowed love with singing love, sometime through the nose as if you snuffed love by smelling love (III.i.8-13)

What Moth underlines here is the extent to which Armado tends to lose himself in the substantiality, the materiality of words, a central

preoccupation in the Renaissance <sup>7</sup> . In Rabelais' *Quart Livre* , the notion that words can be perceived by other senses than the ear is the crux of his version of the tale of frozen words. Like so many colourful ice-cubes, the various categories of words demonstrate that sound can be visible and palpable, just as in Moth's advice to his master, as the word "love" seems to be a material item that may be swallowed as well as snuffed and smelt. Later on in the scene when Moth's words "I will tell you sensibly" (98) sound like an echo of the same chapter in Rabelais ("the people saw the voices sensibly <sup>8</sup> "), the reference to the substantiality of words paves the way for Costard's inclination to *interpret* words sensibly, that is in a manner perceptible to the senses, and in his case as he is a farcical character, the lower senses.

While Armado seems unable to overcome his puzzlement at the apparent paradox of "a costard broken in a shin" ( III .i.59) which he labels "an enigma, a riddle, Costard mishears his words, systematically mistaking them for the names of purgatives. Armado fails to interpret the word "costard" as other than a noun (a head), while Costard systematically hypostasizes words in a most literally-minded way <sup>9</sup> . And when Costard says he " *smells* some l'envoy" (105, emphasis mine), it seems he differs in degree but not in nature from Armado's pleasure in snuffing love.

The dialogue develops variations on the systematic corruption of words which culminate when the (subject) matter of the conversation becomes literal matter (pus) in Costard's reply to Armado

ARMADO. We will talk no more of this matter.

COSTARD. Till there be more matter in the shin (102-103)

as well as in Costard's scatological conclusion: "you will be my purgation and let me loose" (110-111). In both cases, the characters

ground the words in their most literal sense, revealing that the corruption originates not in the words themselves so much as in the speakers' own tongues, a further exemplification of which is provided by Holofernes.

## The progeny of a schoolmaster: Holofernes and his gift

Just as the only professional soldier in the play is a caricature, the only schoolteacher in the play displays most of the conventional characteristics satirized in English plays in the last quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century <sup>10</sup>. Holofernes seems to be one of the unlettered schoolmasters teaching young children the hornbook ( v .i.40). He is also a parasite who takes advantage of his position to dine for free, even inviting Nathaniel to come along: "I do dine today at the father's of a certain pupil of mine" ( iv .ii.135) "I will [...] undertake your *ben venuto*". Remarkably, after he has turned Nathaniel into another parasite, the latter seems to have acquired the schoolmaster's ability for synonymy ( v .i.2-7). Henceforward, there seems to be small differentiation between the two book-men.

In Holofernes' dialogue with Dull about the death of the deer, Dull's misinterpreting the Latin *haud credo* as "old grey doe" reenacts Costard's misunderstanding of Armado's foreign words in Act III, scene 1. The series of innuendoes that follows with Holofernes' "to insert against my *haud credo* for a deer" (iv.i.17) leading to Dull's explicit conclusion "the pollution holds in the exchange" (42) leads to the schoolmaster's monstrous piece of poetry on the death of the deer, so that thematically (with the series of allusions to sexuality) as well as structurally (with the proliferation of alliteration), the scene exemplifies the monstrous generative power of Holofernes' wordiness. The flaw is then explicitly exposed when the character gloats over his imagination using the metaphor of a womb: "These

are begot in the ventricle of memory, nourished in the womb of pia mater, and delivered upon the mellowing of occasion” (IV.ii.61-63).

As Katharine Eisaman Maus has shown, many writers in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries associated the creative imagination with the female body, and the Renaissance male appropriation of the womb as a figure for the imagination is consistent with the exclusion of women from literary endeavours <sup>11</sup> . The notion is burlesqued in Holofernes’ boast, as the scene takes up themes similar to those of Act 3 scene 1: the sense of smell is used here as well in the reference to Ovid, associating the lower senses and hints about sexuality in the evocation of the poet’s creative power: “for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention” ( IV .ii.111-112).

The two possible meanings of nourishment and new creation contained in the scene’s closing word (“recreation”, 145) recalls the two major flaws associated with the scholar in the play: excessive physical appetites, and a self-centered process of generation which symbolically replaces breeding and only results in the monstrous proliferation of words. No wonder then that with such a scholarly model, the kingdom of Navarre should be a place where love’s labours are doomed to fail.

## The women’s use of language “to teach a teacher”

### The Princess’s performative use of rhyme

When the Princess and her ladies first appear onstage, they clearly feature as the female counterparts for Navarre and his men, yet they also differ from them in a number of ways. While Navarre proved unable to assert his authority and fell prey to the flattering tongues



of his followers, the Princess' orders are diligently obeyed by Boyet and she is also very lucid about his flattering words, taking an opportunity to teach him a lesson by means of a generalization, even though she only expresses the premise of her logical reasoning implicitly equating Boyet with the baseness of a chapman:

Good Lord Boyet, my beauty, though but mean,  
Needs not the painted flourish of your praise.  
Beauty is bought by judgment of the eye,  
Not uttered by base sale of chapmen's tongues. ( II .i.13-16)

The process is repeated just before Boyet's exit, with the added benefit of being this time a deductive reasoning (moving from the general to the specific), highlighting Boyet's flaw in a much more concise and direct way: "All pride is willing pride, and yours is so" (36). Remarkably, she uses a rhyme to do so (Boyet's previous line ends with "I go"), a process which looks very similar to the men's use of rhyme in act 1 scene 1, but with a radically different function: instead of starting a system of echoing lines as with the King (with "know" I.i.56, taken up by Berowne lines 61 and 68), the Princess' use of rhyme silences Boyet and gives her the upper hand, asserting her position as a figure of power, reinforcing her effective use of the regal "we": "Tell him the daughter of the King of France" (II.i.30). In the same scene a few lines later, she uses a rhyme to similarly silence the king himself (110-112). Taking things one step further, the recurrence of "know" (used by the men in similar circumstances) in the Princess' exchange with Maria may underline the gender difference. In the men's scene in Act I, scene 1, the repetition of "know" is an identical rhyme, in a series of statements insisting on the paradox of their so-called knowledge:

BEROWNE. What is the end of study, let me know?  
KING. Why, that to know which else we would not know. (I.i.55-56)

But in Act II, scene 2, it is one of three rhyming words which mock the men and display the women's wit when Maria uses the word

after the Princess's rhetorical question (a tool also used by Berowne):

PRINCESS. Some merry mocking lord belike, is't so?

MARIA. They say so that most his humours know.

PRINCESS. Such short-lived wits do wither as they grow. (II.i.52-54)

More than a simple ornament of speech, rhyme is thus used as a tool for contrastive characterization between the four men and the four women, the former merely playing a game of identical echoes, while the latter put language and rhyme to their most effective use.

## The women's ability to "bandy word for word" 12 "

The encounter between the King and the Princess starts off as a refusal of the Princess to use verse and her questioning of the King's welcoming first line, together with a strong hint at his pride/hubris: "'Fair' I give you back again, and 'welcome' I have not yet" (II.i.91). In so doing, she demonstrates both her wit (punning on the signified of "this court", 92) and her social status and power ("too base to be mine", 93). When the King undertakes to teach her a lesson, she bandies word for word upon the central issue of knowledge around which Navarre's conversations with his men continually revolve and demonstrates her superiority through the use of logic, as she did with Boyet:

KING. Your ladyship is ignorant what is.

PRINCESS. Were my lord so, his ignorance were wise,

Where now his knowledge must prove ignorance. (101-102)

In Rosaline and Berowne's first exchange, Rosaline displays a similar ability to bandy word for word. Rosaline echoes no less than Berowne's entire line "Did I not dance with you in Brabant once?" (113-114), refusing to be subjected to his rhetorical question. The split lines the two characters share (115-116, 120) as well as their subsequent shared rhymes reveal the flirtatious quality of a dialogue where the woman has the upper hand and uses the man's words to

dismiss him: “Amen, so you be none” (124), so that the women’s demonstration of their skills in the scene seems to be a literal illustration of Berowne’s words about study: “So study evermore is overshot” (I.i.140). Even when the proximity of the King and his men seems to allow their excessive taste for rhyme to contaminate their guests, as shown in the exchanges between Rosaline and Berowne (II.i.182-189), between Boyet and successively Dumaine (190-191), Longaville (193-204) and Berowne (205-210), it is to signal their impending exit. Boyet, who it seems has acquired their taste for rhyme, is defeated by the women’s rhetorical skills when he concludes: “You are too hard for me” (255), not boding well for the four men when they return to face the ladies. Unlike *The Taming of the Shrew*, where rhetorical rivalry is mainly used in the first encounter-as-confrontation between Kate and Petruccio through the recurrence of stichomythia, in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, rhetorical skills are used both to characterize individuals, and to characterize gendered identities. It seems that the more the four noblemen’s speech mannerisms expand and spread to other men (as is the case with Boyet in Act II, scene 1), the more the women’s superior abilities transpire as they are faced with powerless/impotent adversaries, as Boyet learns at his own expense.

## Reversing the hierarchy: the hunt

Similar sexual overtones are developed with the scene of the hunt in Act IV, scene 1, which in turn will inspire Holofernes to produce his extempore poem on the death of the deer. Suggesting allusions to mythology with Diana and Actaeon as well as with Queen Elizabeth I’s taste for the sport, the hunt is also consciously reversing traditional hierarchies by putting the ladies in the position of the killers. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Bianca playfully invites Petruccio

to hunt her, putting herself in the role of the bird (“Am I your bird? I mean to shift my bush, / And then pursue me as you draw your bow”, v.ii.47-48), and Tranio mocks Petruccio for failing to consummate his marriage using the hunting the deer metaphor: “’Tis thought your deer does hold you at bay”, v.ii.57). In both instances the hunter is male and the prey female.

In *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, the role of the hunter occupied by the Princess show the extent of her power: she does not shy from using real weapons and killing the deer, however vain the activity may be, as she herself acknowledges: “As I for praise alone now seek to spill / The poor deer’s blood, that my heart means no ill.” (iv.i.33-34). It may also be meant as a tool for contrastive characterization: like Navarre in the first scene of the play, she admits she seeks fame, but unlike him, she is fully aware of her own limitations. Her 14-line long rhymed speech functions as an acknowledgement of her flaws showing her self-knowledge and confessing her defects. Despite an apparent formal resemblance with similar speeches by Berowne or the King, her lines have a radically different purpose: while the men’s use of rhymed poetry is characteristic of their self-infatuation, her speech points out all the things she blames herself for in agreeing to “play the murderer” (8).

The game also reflects the nature of occupations at the court of Navarre and “its tendencies towards narcissism and aggression <sup>13</sup>” so that “hunting, in short, carries the aggressive tendencies of the play’s courtly games to a disturbing extreme, suggesting that behind the joke may lie a desire to kill <sup>14</sup> .” A literal weapon put in the Princess’ hand will not be “overshot”. As she has no choice but to play Navarre’s games, in the hunt as in conversation, her arrows never fail to reach their targets, or as Berry puts it, “[s]he kills the deer with a literal arrow and the King with a metaphoric one <sup>15</sup> .”

Here again, as in Act II, scene 1, Boyet is used as a sort of substitute for Navarre and his three companions in the exchanges with Rosaline and Maria at the end of the scene, so that while the Princess is literally hunting the deer, the two ladies are playing the metaphorical hunting game, the erotic game, with Boyet in the role of the willing prey. As he presumably asks both ladies the same question (hence its repetition “Who’s the shooter? Who’s the shooter?”, IV.i.101) putting in relief the reversal of roles in the love-game with the paronomastic pun on “suitor”, Boyet finds himself in the position of a pupil, while Rosaline is the teacher (“Shall I teach you now?”, 101). A series of gradually more explicit sexual jokes follows, culminating in the “hit it” references and the song which acts as Rosaline’s exit cue, after which she is replaced by Maria and the game repeats itself, reaching new lows in terms of explicitness as Costard intervenes, acting as Boyet’s partner. The move is towards more and more literally-minded utterances including masturbation and ejaculation, as Maria notes: “Come, come, you talk greasily, your lips grow foul” (130). The exchange ends on Costard’s echo of Boyet’s statement of defeat in Act II, scene 1: “She’s too hard for you at pricks, sir. Challenge her to bowl” (131), prompting Boyet’s erotic reply: “I fear too much rubbing” (132). As Stephen Greenblatt has shown <sup>16</sup>, friction for Shakespeare is specifically associated with verbal wit, and Boyet is no match for any of the ladies in the game, a possible hint at the ladies’ superior erotic knowledge and certainly superior sexual appetite, as Berowne had already noted about Rosaline in his soliloquy in Act 3:

Ay, and by heaven, one that will do the deed  
Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard ( III .i.175-176)

## The lessons of the comedy: the women’s manner

As Margreta de Grazia has pointed out, much has been made of the linguistic excesses so characteristic of *Love's Labour's Lost* and many links have been established with 20<sup>th</sup> century linguistic theory. However, as she demonstrates, when re-historicizing linguistic perception in the context of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, it appears that language is deemed competent if the speaker's will is correct <sup>17</sup>. In such a perspective, the corruption of language lies in the nature of the *person* using it rather than in the *medium* itself. By putting the issue of study and learning in such a central place and by the women's apt use of language and the men's vanity, it seems the play demonstrates the problem lies with the male characters' corruption, not with language itself.

## Preposterous developments

The kingdom of Navarre, placed in the opening scene under the guiding principles of spiritual warfare and study, is peopled by figures who should by profession exemplify these virtues: the curate, the scholar and the soldier. In other words, while the expected hierarchies between the sexes are reversed and the women are turned into the men's teachers, the male figures who should exemplify the virtuous ideals professed by Navarre turn out to be satirical and comical distortions of the very principles they – as Navarre – claim to embody. Perhaps this is precisely where the rub originates: in their bodies and in their appetites.

Moth denounces both Holofernes and Nathaniel as parasites in a metaphor which insists upon the materiality of words conceived as palatable, just as the word "love" for Armado was palpable and could be swallowed or snuffed: "They have been at a great feast of languages and stolen the scraps" ( v .i.32), and proceeds to put

Holofernes' knowledge to the test by asking him to spell backwards, one in the many references to preposterousness <sup>18</sup> which echoes Nathaniel's praise of Holofernes' tutoring of boys ( IV .ii.66). Moth's display of wit, praised equally by Costard and Armado, seems to inspire both and the verbal pyrotechnics that follows sinks lower and lower into scatology, starting with Costard's false Latin " *ad dunghill* " ( v .i.64) which makes a lot of sense in its apparent nonsense. Holofernes' reaction is expressed using the sense of smell, giving even more vividness to the reference to excrement, and Armado's words sustain and develop the image: "arts-man, perambulate" (65). The next Latin word, "mons", is the occasion of a direct reference to Holofernes' teaching methods with boys in a school termed "charge-house" and it seems Armado's idea about the exact nature of the education Holofernes delivers contaminates Holofernes' speech to the extent that he coins the phrase "the posteriors of this day" (72), immediately taken up by the pedant, who deems it "well culled", which puns on the French *cul* -led. In Armado's confidences about his relationship with Navarre, as the phrase "let it pass" recurs (78-79, 81, 87) it seems Armado is revealing an intimacy ("what is inward between us", 78) which sheds a new light on the uses Navarre meant to have for Armado ("I will use him for my minstrelsy", I .i.174). The playful amorous caresses the verb "dally" refers to would be enough in themselves to hint at the sexual nature of the relationship, but the concatenation of signifiers culminates in the gesture that accompanies the scatological reference: "with his royal finger *thus* to dally with my excrement" ( v .i.82-83, emphasis mine). The "certain special honours" (85-86) that Navarre imparts to Armado are one more flaw defining the reasons for the sterility of the all-male world of his academy.

## Staging a confrontation

As Boyet warns the Princess of the impending arrival of the four men by using the metaphor of love as warfare, the Princess' response underlines the dichotomy between the men's false idol, Cupid, and the French women's true patron saint: "Saint Denis to Saint Cupid!" (v.ii.87). In the conversation that follows, as she learns what the men mean to do and what arms they are using, those of a disguise, she proves her ability to respond by using the same weapon in a more clever way: "we will everyone be masked" (127) and use their favours as outward signs of identification: "So shall Berowne take me for Rosaline" (133). By using the men's own tools better, the Princess means to teach them a lesson, shown in the parallel construction: "mock for mock" (140), "sport by sport o'erthrown" (153), winning the metaphoric battle by keeping her ground: "So shall we stay, mocking intended game/And they, well mocked, depart away with shame" (155-156). As the men who think their disguise is a clever trick are in a position of constant dramatic irony, the structure of the play emphasizes their weaknesses and the women's strength.

Remarkably, this pseudo battle between the sexes takes the form of a lesson in reckoning, as Rosaline (pretending to be the Princess) asks the men who claim to have walked many miles to come to them, how many inches are in one mile (v.ii.188-189). As Berowne answers with a compliment to evade the question, Rosaline asks again (195-197) and he evades answering again, proving he is no better at reckoning than Armado was with Moth. All this while, the King has remained silent, likewise proving his ignorance in the matter. As he and Rosaline in disguise converse apart, the Princess in disguise and Berowne have a conversation in which she mocks him by teaching



him to count, showing him she is fully aware of the flattery in his words: “Honey, milk and sugar: there is three” (231).

The confrontation ends with Boyet’s moralization, stating the women’s victory by taking up warfare imagery and underlining what makes the women such fierce adversaries: unlike the men whose words are literally-oriented and linked to bodily needs and functions, the women’s language is “[a]bove the sense of sense” (v.ii.259). When the ladies and the lords meet again, the Princess’ reply to the King sound like an echo of their very first encounter, as she gives his words of greeting back to him again “ ‘Fair’ in ‘all hail’ is foul, as I conceive” (340), a lesson indicating that he fails to adequately differentiate between evil and virtue. This is taken up a few lines further: “You nickname virtue: ‘vice’ you should have spoke” (349).

The theme of virtue runs through the scene, and Dumaine seems to be the first to see sense: “Let us confess and turn it into a jest” (v.ii.390), while Berowne cannot help falling back into his old rhetorical ways, as his speech of defeat and renunciation proves he is doing the opposite of what he says: as he claims to be renouncing poetry and its flourishes, the form and the abundance of figures he uses to signify this show he is wallowing in it, not giving it up. The recurrence of foreign (French) words at the end of his speech gives an opportunity to Rosaline to nail down the lesson, as she rebukes Berowne: “*sans* ‘sans’ I pray you” (416) which is probably best pronounced as “*sans sens(e)*”.

## The virtue of laughter

While Navarre’s ambition was to reach fame by setting up a model academy based on the principles of spiritual warfare and study, his kingdom turns out to be a place of profound corruption where men’s

thoughts and inclinations prove baser and baser as the play unfolds, and where the figures who are supposed to represent the professed ideals of noble warfare, religious virtue and scholarly knowledge appear to be grotesque or satirical caricatures. The noble principles voiced by Navarre in the opening scene hardly hold once the Princess and her ladies have arrived, and the women prove more apt than the men in all the fields they had professed to study, as well as in the rhetorical warfare that takes place between the sexes on the battlefield of make-believe, stage-like performance. Armed with masks and favours, the ladies defeat the men at their own game, outdoing them and teaching them a scathing lesson which makes the Princess' words in Act II, scene 1 come true, as she indeed has taught a teacher a lesson in the art of poetry, courtship and acting. What may seem frivolous at first is in fact a means to reach the virtuous goal professed at the beginning of the play and that Navarre – were it not for the Princess' intervention – would have been unable to achieve: the path to virtue is through self-knowledge and the admission of one's own flaws. As Dumaine resolves to confess and the Princess invites the King to do so ("The fairest is confession", v.ii.432), it becomes obvious that the part played by the women includes not only the function of teacher but also that of a spiritual guide.

After the entertaining interim of the Pageant of the Nine Worthies and the intrusion of death with the message delivered by Marcadé, it seems that note is the predominant one, as the former Princess, now Queen of France, imposes upon Navarre a one-year penance, a fate similar to her own process of mourning which also ironically will make him literally follow the strict principles of his edict in Act I. A similar twelve-month penance is given to Berowne by Rosaline, taking up the theme of acting and the function of laughter, that is

putting Berowne's rhetorical talent to the test by making his jokes into a sort of medicine able to alleviate the sufferings of the sick and the dying. Such emphasis on humour, the main fuel of comedy, posits the genre itself and not simply Berowne's wit, as a power able to rival with the agony of sickness and the fear of death:

ROSALINE. You shall this twelvemonth term from day to day  
Visit the speechless sick and still converse  
With groaning wretches; and your task shall be  
With all the fierce endeavor of your wit  
To enforce the pained impotent to smile. ( v .ii.818-822)

The scene displays an increasingly tragic inclination with the reference to the death of Katharine's unnamed sister that opens the scene (12-13), the *memento mori* glimpsed at when the lords mock Holofernes' appearance in the pageant and offer several interpretations for it, among which "A death's face in a ring" (598), and Marcadé's announcement of the death of the King of France. Yet the penance chosen by Rosaline for Berowne intimates the possible existence of a counterpoint to the darkness of death, in the proper use of jests, to "move wild laughter in the throat of death" (823). In so doing, laughter is endowed with two types of virtues: the power to relieve the pains of the hearers' sufferings (a curative power already put in relief in the induction of *The Taming of the Shrew*, where Sly is willing to hear the play prescribed by his doctors for its curative powers <sup>19</sup>) if Berowne succeeds, and therefore reforms himself by putting his talent in the selfless service of others; or undergo the alternative type of self-reformation that Rosaline suggest, by giving up on his scorns entirely:

ROSALINE . But if they will not, throw away that spirit,  
And I shall find you empty of that fault,  
Right joyful of your reformation. ( v .ii.855-857)

Bidding farewell to the lords in disguise, the Princess called them “my frozen Muscovites” (v.ii.265). In a play where references to the materiality of words are numerous and where potential echoes of the tale of the frozen words can be found, it is tempting to see the appellation as more than a coincidence. In a kingdom where the idolization of words reaches such extremes that reading comes to be defined as a pseudo-Eucharist by the man of the cloth (Nathaniel saying about Dull “He hath not eat paper, as it were; he hath not drunk ink.”, iv.ii.22), and where words, either on paper or delivered by so-called Muscovites, fail so spectacularly to reach their proper targets, it seems in so calling Navarre and his men that the Princess makes clear where their chief flaw resides: in their misplaced use of language. Remarkably, it is the male characters who are affected with something akin to verbal incontinence in the play, and not the women, and even more specifically with an excessive taste for foreign words, which at the time was taken as a sign of social disease for the kingdom <sup>20</sup>. As the men are prescribed a potential cure for this ailment, Rosaline’s generalization significantly puts the value of a jest in the listener’s ear, which in turn invites the play’s hearers to reflect upon their own importance in the working of the comedy. The gaping ending, “not like an old comedy”, leaves the outcome of the love-plot entirely in the hands of the audience (a tool that Shakespeare later develops with a direct address to the audience in the epilogue of *The Tempest*) while the lessons learnt by the men put the emphasis on the cathartic potential of comedy as a counterpoint to suffering and death, so that the lesson at work is ultimately one in the art of hearing, and in the art of hearing a comedy.

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# NOTES

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19. “Therefore they [your doctors] thought it good you hear a play  
And frame your mind to mirth and merriment  
Which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life.” (Induction 2.130-132).

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## ABSTRACTS

The thematisation of the process of teaching and learning in *Love's Labour's Lost* is used as a tool of contrastive characterization to show how the male characters professing ideals of virtue and knowledge are those least able to enforce them. Ironically, the key to their redemption lies precisely in those whose company they banish, i.e. women. As the play develops and the women are shown as able to use the men's own rhetorical weapons much more effectively than they are, the satirical vein of the play grows into an effective denunciation of the flaws of Navarre which, together with the strongly metatheatrical last act, culminates in a lesson on the cathartic potential of comedy.

La thématization du processus d'enseignement et d'apprentissage dans *Love's Labour's Lost* est utilisée comme outil de caractérisation contrastive pour montrer comment les personnages masculins sont les moins aptes à mettre en œuvre et faire advenir les principes de vertu et de savoir qu'ils professent. La clé de leur rédemption est, de manière ironique, détenue précisément par celles dont ils ont banni la présence, à savoir les personnages féminins. Au fil de la pièce, alors que les femmes s'avèrent capables d'utiliser bien plus efficacement que les hommes les armes rhétoriques de ces derniers, la veine satirique de la pièce s'accroît et donne lieu à la dénonciation des failles de Navarre, ce qui, ajouté à la dimension très métathéâtrale du cinquième acte, amène au point culminant : une leçon sur le potentiel cathartique de la comédie.

# INDEX

**Keywords:** teaching, learning, characterization, women, men, comedy, catharsis, Love's Labour's Lost **Mots-clés:** enseignement, apprentissage, caractérisation, hommes, femmes, comédie, catharsis, Peines d'amour perdues

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# Love in *Love's Labour's Lost*: Ontological Foundation or Laughing Matter?

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The domain of folly in *Love's Labour's Lost* is an ever-expanding domain in which love plays the leading role. <sup>1</sup> Folly is so pervasive in the play that it verges on becoming an existential statement. What makes the world go round is not love or money or power or the desire for knowledge, but folly. We may chase after these desirables, but if we look back over our shoulder we will probably see folly not far behind, laughing at us for one or another foolish impulse which is driving our endeavour, whether we know it or not. As Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* makes clear, folly appears in different guises and has several friends and associates, one being self-love:

Is there any duty throughout life which you can perform [asks Folly], unless you have Self-love at hand to help you, Self-love who is so prompt to take my place on all occasions that she is rightly called my sister? What is so foolish as self-satisfaction and self-admiration? But then what agreeable, pleasant or graceful act can you perform if you aren't self-satisfied? <sup>2</sup>

Characteristically, Erasmus's Folly does not deliver a simple or single message, safe from the ambivalences of irony and paradox. Does the folly of narcissistic self-love and self-admiration only make us laughable and ridiculous, or does this form of folly serve some



necessary and important purpose? Without any shred of self-love, life would quickly become unbearable. Yet, self-admiration can easily make fools of us. Whatever wisdom may ultimately be redeemed from folly, an awareness of the ubiquity of folly as folly gives rise to the humbling perspective that human existence is cause for laughter, mirth and ridicule. 'Humour', argues the philosopher Simon Critchley, 'recalls us to the modesty and limitedness of the human condition, a limitedness that calls not for tragic-heroic affirmation but comic *acknowledgement*, not Promethean authenticity but a laughable inauthenticity'.<sup>3</sup> The only earnest message of comedy, at least from this perspective on humour, is *not* to be too earnest, and especially perhaps, when it comes to affairs of the heart and the foundational certainties that the heart seeks.

As I have argued elsewhere, Shakespearean comedy does not entirely banish seriousness, but this is hard-won and pitted against the comic injunction *not* to take ourselves and our desire for foundations and certainties over-seriously.<sup>4</sup> This is one of the ways comedy typically orients us towards human life. In tragedy, we are made to feel the removal of firm foundations intensely, as loss. In *Othello*, for example, Othello's jealous mind anxiously inhabits the gap between perception and reality: 'By the world', he says to Iago, 'I think my wife be honest, and think she is not. / I think that thou art just, and think thou art not.'<sup>5</sup> The dream of transparency, whereby one consciousness is so umbilically joined to another that communication seems redundant, is ruined by jealousy and the green-eyed monster's insinuation that we might, after all, be strangers to one another. In comedy, however, certainty is more often than not mocked and uncertainty embraced. It is the way of the comic world, for example, to make category errors whereby inauthentic passions and urges get mistaken for authentic ones. Out

of this irreverently treated confusion can come clarification as well as seriousness, but seriousness is not as immediately acceptable in the comic universe as it is in the tragic one. Those who wax prematurely serious about the nature of love, for example, are likely to be seen as pontificators. In comedy, earnestness has to be earned. The only unqualified seriousness that comedy allows is once again *not* to take ourselves seriously. Only with that premise in place can other serious conclusions follow.

In *Love's Labour's Lost*, ridicule's net expands to include virtually all of the characters in the play. Even those characters who themselves *ridicule* are in turn ridiculed for counting themselves *above* ridicule. The scene which in particular demonstrates folly's gradual colonisation of the world of the play is the one in which one courtier after another achieves comic ascendancy only for his position of superiority to be immediately overturned. Having collectively foresworn love, each courtier (predictably) falls in love and is (equally predictably) found out. The (unpredictable) method of finding out nicely ridicules the ridiculer and turns the one-upmanship of ego humour into a shared recognition of our 'laughable inauthenticity', to recall Simon Critchley's phrase. First the King comes onstage to read his love sonnet alone – or so he thinks – and then stands aside to overhear Longueville do exactly the same. This pattern is repeated and so, too, is the subsequent exposure of one courtier by another. Longueville steps forward to tell Dumaine that 'I should blush, I know, / To be o'erheard and taken napping so', only for the King to use Longueville's own words to shame Longueville himself: 'Come sir, you blush. As his, your case is such. / You chide at him, offending twice as much'. <sup>6</sup>

The figure who has overseen and overheard everything without yet being exposed is Biron, whose scorn is significantly more vitriolic

than the previous two exposers of folly. Where Longueville and the King talk about being shamed in terms of blushing, Biron talks about whipping and hypocrisy: 'Now step I forth to whip hypocrisy.' (IV.iii.149). Biron's aggressive Juvenalian satire makes a proverbial mountain out of a molehill. It makes a catastrophe of folly. By contrast, the thought that the appropriate response to being found out is 'merely' to blush normalises folly. Folly is cause for 'only human' comic embarrassment rather than tragedy. Biron, as the King points out, has struck the wrong tone; his 'jest' is too 'bitter' (IV.iii.172).

Blushing also feminises the courtiers, because blushing has conventionally been associated with femininity.<sup>7</sup> The levelling principle of comedy applies to gender identities, and perhaps especially to gender identities in Shakespeare's comedies, because gender hierarchies are overturned by virtue of women being designated, for reasons which will become clear, as *custodians* of the human. Women are in other words placed in important roles *above* men as salvagers of threatened human values or resources. One area to which this clearly applies is love. But it also applies to folly and the recognition of folly. The courtiers need to recognise that folly is normal, that they are foolish to think that they are immune from it, and that folly is not cause for the kind of moral panic that the scourge Biron thinks it is. Biron's moment of triumph is in any case short-lived as his love is in turn exposed and he is himself levelled by folly: 'I confess, I confess ... That you three fools lacked me fool to make up the mess.' (IV.iii.203-5). Thus folly, as I suggested earlier, fast becomes the existential norm rather than exception, such that, as C. L. Barber puts it in *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (1959): 'in the classic manner of Erasmus in his *Praise of Folly*, it becomes folly not to be a fool'.<sup>8</sup>

But here we need to return to the question: what kind of fool? As both Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* and Shakespeare's plays demonstrate, there are fools and fools, wise and otherwise. <sup>9</sup> Following the lead of the aphorism quoted by Touchstone in *As You Like It* that 'The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool', <sup>10</sup> we could say that the wise fool knows that humans are prone to folly, is able to laugh at himself, recognises his own limits (and the limits of human beings in general) and is aware that claims to authenticity and knowledge can be, at best, premature, and at worst, permanently unrealistic. However, Touchstone's aphorism can be understood as not simply *inverting* the categories of wisdom and folly, but as *confusing* them, for it suggests, as is common in Shakespeare, that things are not always as they may seem. One thing – wisdom – may be or may become an entirely different thing – folly. But that different thing may then morph into something else. In the Shakespearean universe, categories are de-stabilised, and not simply inverted. In such a topsy-turvy world, what counts as foolish and worthy of ridicule, on the one hand, and wise and worthy of serious attention on the other, may not always be clear-cut. So when and where are we to take love's fools in *Love's Labour's Lost* seriously? Under what conditions do these fools for love qualify for earnest treatment? Is their courtship mere 'lining to the time' (V.ii.773), as the Queen later calls it, or is there some serious point to it? We might be tempted, early on, to level such earnest accusations at the courtiers as: they are shallow and depthless, they have learnt all their love lore from not very good love poetry and consequently know little or nothing about the realities of loving. But such accusations, though valid, may seem untimely and unseasonable. Would only a fool who thinks himself wise, like the pedant Holofernes, spoil the festive spirit in the name of such sobering

truths? When is the right moment, if ever there is one, to unmask the foolish illusions of human beings and identify the truth that they seem unable to fathom?

When the scholars turned lovers in *Love's Labour's Lost* find out that each one of them has forsworn their vow to devote themselves exclusively to the life of the mind, they turn to Biron to justify their about-turn. 'Now prove / Our loving lawful', says the King 'and our faith not torn'. Dumaine follows suit: 'Ay, marry there, some flattery for this evil' and Longueville in similar vein pleads for 'some authority how to proceed, / Some tricks, some quillets how to cheat the devil' (IV.iii.282-86). Some fake, trumped-up *show* of authority, based on 'tricks' and 'quilletts' (meaning quibbles) will do, it seems. Some *illusion* of authority is all that is required because uppermost in the courtiers' minds is the imperative not to lose face. At the same time, there is a sophisticated knowingness on the part of the courtiers of the fact that their faces are faces which are continually at risk of being seen through and which might in fact be interesting to lose, or at least to contemplate losing. Why interesting? Because to put identity at risk is to create suspense, and in the case of romantic comedy, to create the conditions for play and foreplay. Part of the flirtatious banter which occurs between the two principal groups is a form of verbal striptease in which a covering or disguise is unveiled, only for another layer to stand in the way of complete nakedness.

When the courtiers disguise themselves as Russians, for the benefit of the women who are themselves masked, appearances are layered one on top of another:

ROSALINE: How many weary steps,  
Of many weary miles you have o'ergone,  
Are numbered in the travel of one mile?

BIRON: We number nothing that we spend for you.

Our duty is so rich, so infinite,  
That we may do it still without account.

Vouchsafe to show the sunshine of your face,  
That we, like savages, may worship it.

ROSALINE: My face is but a moon, and clouded too.

KING: Blessed are clouds, to do as such clouds do.

Vouchsafe, bright moon, and these thy stars, to shine,  
Those clouds removed, upon our watery eyne.

ROSALINE: O vain petitioner, beg a greater matter!

Thou now requests but moonshine in the water.

(V.ii.194-207)

Beneath the appearance of the Russian is Biron the courtier speaking romantic clichés about the dazzling appearance he imagines seeing beneath the mask worn by Rosaline who then exposes the revelation desired by the courtiers as insubstantial: nothing but ‘moonshine in the water’. These are ‘sign[s] of she’ to borrow a phrase of Biron’s, not the ‘she herself’ (V.ii.468-9). But the comedic play of signs, replete with mistaken identities, category errors, and metaphorically missing persons have kindled the fires of desire at the same time as they have opened love to playful uncertainty. For underneath one ‘sign of she’ may be another sign, and then another, *ad infinitum*. It is a relatively easy and obvious point to make that the courtiers routinely replace the actual objects of their devotion with clichéd, textual versions of them, versions which are more in keeping with the bookish ways they are supposed to have relinquished than with ‘real life’. But this kind of unmasking once again seems untimely. To appeal soberly to some ‘real’ Rosaline beneath the signs she is taken or mistaken for does not seem, at this point in the play, the right kind of move. The festive spirit of the play makes any such quest for ‘reality’, ‘truth’, ‘authenticity’ and foundations seem inappropriately, or to recall the phrase I used earlier, unseasonably leaden. Yes, it is true, that the romantic

illusions of the men are habitually punctured by the women, but simple oppositions between appearance and reality, illusion and truth, authenticity and inauthenticity, the substantial and the insubstantial, the disembodied and the down-to-earth, are not immediately enforced. After Rosaline has wittily implied that the courtiers' romantic idealisations are empty, instead of ending the dance of words and signs whose relation to reality is no doubt always in doubt, she begins another 'game of wit':

ROSALINE: O vain petitioner, beg a greater matter!

Thou now requests but moonshine in the water.

KING: Then in our measure do but vouchsafe one change

Thou bid'st me beg; this begging is not strange

ROSALINE: Play music, then! [*Music plays*] Nay, you must do it soon.

Not yet? No dance! Thus change I like the moon.

(V.ii.207-11)

Rosaline is not, at this stage, a killjoy. She does not want the play to stop in the name of some sobering truth about who she really is. What she wants is better and faster play, play that moves the game of love beyond the tired, worn-out clichés wittingly or unwittingly recycled by the courtiers. In a trice, Rosaline asks for dance music, demands an instant response - 'you must do it soon' - then immediately cancels the request as if to suggest that the courtiers are just too sluggish, too slow off the mark. If there is to be a *play* of appearances, a comedy of mistaken or half-mistaken identities, then let that play be more fleet-footed and energetic, with a view, perhaps, to exhausting itself more quickly than at the slower pace set by the men.

The guises and disguises of lovers are not so much unmasked in the name of truth, then, as transformed into different faces. What applies to the ostensible objects of the lovers' devotions also applies to love itself. For love itself rapidly changes face. It changes hue just

as quickly as the scholars-turned-lovers-turned-Russians do. Love is a gallimaufry of infatuation, idolatry, tyranny, narcissism, compassion, folly, blindness, madness, drunkenness, giddiness, religion, fine feeling and agent of civilisation. When Biron in Act 3 declares himself in love it is as one who has been smitten by that ‘wimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy ... Dan Cupid’:

And I, forsooth, in love! I that have been love's whip,  
A very beadle to a humorous sigh,  
A critic, nay, a night-watch constable,  
A domineering pedant o'er the boy,  
Than whom no mortal so magnificent!  
This wimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy.  
This Signor Junior, giant dwarf, Dan Cupid  
Regent of love-rhymes, lord of all folded arms,  
Th'anointed sovereign of sighs and groans [...]  
[...] O my little heart!  
And I to be corporal of his field  
And wear his colours like a tumbler's hoop!  
(III.i.169-83)

Love here is folly, and unambiguously so, it seems, with no redeemable wisdom about it, as far as Biron is concerned. Yet called upon a few scenes later to justify the courtiers' disavowal of their life of scholarship, Biron rises to the occasion by venerating love and turning it into a form of religion:

[Love] adds a precious seeing to the eye –  
A lover's eyes will gaze an eagle blind.  
A lover's ear will hear the lowest sound  
When the suspicious head of theft is stopped.  
Love's feeling is more soft and sensible  
Than are the tender horns of cockled snails. [...]  
And when Love speaks, the voice of all the gods  
Make heaven drowsy with the harmony.  
Never durst poet touch a pen to write  
Until his ink were tempered with Love's sighs.  
O, then his lines would ravish savage ears,  
And plant in tyrants mild humility.



From women's eyes this doctrine I derive:  
They sparkle still the right Promethean fire;  
They are the books, the arts, the academes,  
That show, contain, and nourish all the world,  
Else none at all in aught proves excellent.  
(IV.iii.309-30)

Biron's command of words is such that he can do what he will with them, here re-creating the meaning of love as occasion demands, in response to Longueville's plea to Biron to conjure up 'some authority how to proceed, / Some tricks, some quilllets, how to cheat the devil' (IV.iii.285-6). Here, then, is another appearance, or so it might seem, except for the fact that at some indeterminate point or another, we might become weary of the endless substitution of one signifier of love for another. We might begin to want more substance, and probably at the prompting of characters (like Rosaline, for example) who play, but play semi-seriously, with a view to discriminating between more or less substantial and more or less shallow appeals to love. And perhaps Biron's speech does not itself present just another 'appearance' of love. Perhaps we might say, in imitation of the play's own propensity for paradox, that what Biron's speech offers is a 'seeming appearance', an appearance masquerading as a profound reality about love but one which might have some truth to it. As is well-known, rhetorical training in the Renaissance involved arguing *in utramque partem*, either side of a case. As Aristotle and subsequent theorists of rhetoric proposed, rhetoric produced knowledge that was probable rather than certain. Rhetorical love - love subjected to continuous rhetorical treatment - is in danger in *Love's Labour's Lost* of becoming empty love, love in which style reigns permanently over substance, manner over matter, eloquence over wisdom. Yet the 'sweet smoke of rhetoric' (III.i.61), including amorous rhetoric, which is clearly the object of the play's satire is not always and only an object of ridicule, for there is sometimes just enough 'probability'

in what is said about love to make us wonder what truths might lie hidden or half-hidden in the play's various rhetorical excursions.

To talk about matters of truth and substance is of course to wax metaphysical. The universalising, foundation-seeking cast of thinking that is bound up with metaphysics has not been in favour amongst culturally-inclined, historically-minded critics over the last forty years. Yet the play nudges its way towards the 'seriousness' of a foundation-seeking philosophy of love even as it subjects love and lovers to mockery, and mediates its metaphysics through the dialogic, 'probabilising' conduits of drama and rhetoric. Another way of thinking about these questions is to suggest that there are two comic registers operating in tandem in *Love's Labour's Lost*: one festive, mocking, 'light', playful and deflating of attempts upon seriousness; the other - more of a narrative structure than a register - seeking clarification amidst the topsy-turvy world of illusions and misperceptions also inherent to comedy. As C. L. Barber, Northrop Frye and others have recognised, comedy can be a plot structure which is also a ritualistic patterning of experience, leading from confusion to clarification, or from the destruction of selves through ridicule and mayhem to the tentative renewal of them. <sup>11</sup>

Biron himself uses the language of self-loss and self-renewal - 'Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves, / Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths' (IV.iii.338-9). In so doing, he nudges the play into becoming an existential quest-narrative, whereby an inauthentic self is shed in favour of a more authentic one, and the superficialities to which lovers are prone are cast aside to reveal a deeper wisdom about love. For all Biron's verbal showmanship, which in festive manner releases language from the necessity of 'meaning', the other comedic register present in the play is invoked in this *semi-serious* quest for renewal and rebirth. I emphasise semi-serious because

Biron's grandiose elevation of love can be simultaneously read as a mock-elevation. The doubling of comic perspective means that we are again made to wonder when we should begin to weigh love's claims. Has Biron yet proved himself worthy to be taken seriously? Has he earned the right to be earnest?

It is not easy to say exactly when or where we should begin asking such truth-questions about love as: is love de-sublimated as sexual desire, 'flesh' made 'deity' (IV.iii.71-3), as Biron puts it, the truth about love? Or is the neo-platonised version of love he invokes in his later speech the truth that gives the lie to the reductive materialism of the flesh? Love, so Biron claims, deepens perception, adding 'a precious seeing to the eye' (IV.iii.309); it sensitises – 'Love's feeling is [...] soft and sensitive' (IV.iii.313); love also civilises, ravishing 'savage ears' (IV.iii.324); it humbles by planting 'in tyrants mild humility' (IV.iii.325) and brings 'harmony' (IV.iii.321). Are these all throw-away lines which affirm nothing but the extensiveness of Biron's verbal repertoire? Or do some of them make affective and ontological claims upon us? It is tempting to be drawn in by at least some of these apotheoses, such as the idea that 'love adds a precious seeing to the eye', for this statement *evokes* a metaphysics of engagement. I emphasise 'evokes' because Biron does not spell out what precious seeing might involve. He may fancy himself a philosopher but he is not a systematic one. Nevertheless he hints at a philosophy of love, based upon engagement. To turn the probable knowledge of a foolish lover's rhetoric into something more substantial I want to turn briefly to one of the most illuminatingly synoptic perspectives on love to have emerged recently, which is that of the philosopher Simon May. 'If we all have a need to love', writes May,

it is because we all need to feel at home in the world: to root our life in the here and now; to give our existence solidity and validity; to deepen the sensation of being; to enable us to experience the reality of our life as indestructible (even if we all also accept that our life is temporary and will end in death.)

May places these various wants and needs under his *ur*-category, 'ontological rootedness'. The need to feel ontologically rooted can according to May be met in different ways:

At first, home is our mother and father; gradually its possibilities become larger and more complex: they might include our work, our friends, our children, nature, God. Or places, ideas, and ideals. Or contrary to common prejudice – money or status and the people who offer us access to it. For these can powerfully root, even if they are less noble and more obviously instrumental than other objects of love. <sup>12</sup>

The promise of love, as philosophized by May, is that it acts as a solution to the perplexities, uncertainties and divisions of existence by rooting us and deepening 'the sensation of being' as he puts it. May's idea is close to Biron's idea of precious seeing, seeing that is precious because it makes us feel fully engaged in the world rather than at odds with it.

To begin with, as is common with romantic love, ontological rootedness takes place inside the lover's narcissistic imagination. There is someone, seemingly out there, who makes the world seem less alien, less hostile, and worth living in. But the love object is an image or ideal that exists in the mind of the lover and bears little relation to reality. Narcissistic romantic love and ego-humour, humour designed to bolster the self at the expense of another, go hand in hand in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Both have to be relinquished. The narcissism of love has to be abandoned through the realisation that the romantic perception of the person and the person herself (whoever that might be) may not coincide. And ego-humour, in the case of Biron, has to cede place to humour sensitive to the condition

of the sick and the dying. This is the love-test set by Rosaline for Biron, one which now definitely injects seriousness into the 'sport' of the play. Of the many proverbs in *Love's Labour's Lost*, often used glibly – sportively – as possible containers for experience, Rosaline's at the end of the play stands out as one demanding unambiguously serious consideration: 'A jest's prosperity lies in the ear / of him that hears it, never in the tongue / Of him that makes it' (V.ii.847-9). Rosaline's emphasis on reception rather than production instructs Biron that the tellers of jokes are dependent on their listeners, that listeners should be regarded as more than a pair of admiring ears and that this should be reflected in a more intimate knowledge of one's audience/s. Transferred to the domain of love, this means that Biron will need to subject the 'ontological rootedness' that he desires from love to the risk of an actual relationship rather than one that exists in his head. If love is a 'precious seeing' because it engages us meaningfully in and with the world, then this 'seeing' will have to be more attentive, and accept that love beyond narcissism does not come with absolute guarantees.

The labour of love might have been lost in this comedy if its sole comic mode was festive, but its other comic mode, involving a search for clarification and wisdom, means that love is not only a laughing matter and sign of human folly. We do need to acknowledge the folly of taking ourselves, especially our romantic selves, too seriously, and the play implicitly warns against premature philosophising. Yet the play, especially at the end, lays down conditions for being taken seriously as a lover, and these conditions may then make us seriously – and even anxiously – wonder what remains of love beyond the many appearances it has assumed during the course of the play.

Injecting another sombre note into the comedy, the Queen has this blunt message for the men:

We have received your letters, full of love,  
Your favours, the ambassadors of love,  
And in our maiden council rated them  
At courtship, pleasant jest, and courtesy,  
As bombast and as lining to the time.  
But more devout than this in our respects  
Have we not been, and therefore met your loves  
In their own fashion, like a merriment. (V.ii.769-76)

Dumaine's response to this is: 'Our letters ... showed much more than jest' (V.ii.777). 'So did our looks' (V.ii.778) is Longueville's supporting comment. Rosaline's response is curt: 'We did not quote them so' (V.ii.779). Easy protestations of serious intent are not good enough.

Here and elsewhere in Shakespeare's plays (Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Paulina in *The Winter's Tale*, Cordelia as the albeit initially ignored spokeswoman for love in *King Lear*), women are empowered in relation to love and men disempowered. Women are educators, sages and judges and men, novices. While this might be read as reinforcing gender stereotypes by relegating women to a private rather than public sphere of influence, such is the importance of love to worlds that are often presented in Shakespeare's plays (comedies and tragedies alike) as heartless, that to be an arbiter of love is to be significantly empowered. Moreover, love is hardly ever just a private matter between two people, for its significance is constantly being amplified. In the world of Shakespearean comedy, people not only fall in love (or think that they do), they talk about it, reflect upon it, justify their falling in love and expand their self-justifications into heavyweight existential statements. For women to intervene in matters of affection, and stipulate the conditions for being taken seriously as a lover, is therefore to intervene in no 'merely domestic' affair.

I will conclude by offering a brief word about my method in this paper, in the context of what I see as currently happening in literary studies. We are emerging into a situation in which it is once more possible to talk, provisionally and self-reflexively of course, about the human. For a long time, this did not seem possible. That is because anti-essentialist scepticism towards human universals has been one of the prevailing orthodoxies in the literary academy over the last forty years. History and historically contingent ideologies are taken to shape human consciousness, not the other way round. The 'very idea of a "defining human essence" is precisely what new historicists find vacuous and untenable', wrote Stephen Greenblatt in 1990, and this sentiment is one widely shared by historicist critics, of different hues, both before and after 1990. <sup>13</sup> Love's labour was therefore itself often lost by hard-line historicists. In 1982, Arthur Marotti wrote what was to become an influential essay called "Love is not love': Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences and the Social Order". Reversing what he saw as the formalist fallacy of removing texts from their social contexts, Marotti restored the public dimension of putatively private poems and treated 'love' as the medium through which Elizabethan socioeconomic circumstances reveal themselves. 'Love lyrics' writes Marotti, 'could express figuratively the realities of suit, service and recompense with which ambitious men were insistently concerned as well as the frustrations and disappointments experienced in socially competitive environments'. <sup>14</sup> Love is thus treated by Marotti less as a phenomenon in its own right than an epi-phenomenon, a secondary symptom of a cause located elsewhere, in the struggle for position and employment at court. <sup>15</sup> The ostensible subject matter of sonnet sequences, namely love, was thus displaced in Marotti's essay by the 'real' subject matter of the sonnets, namely courtiership and power. But critics

and theorists have been turning their attention once more to the human (including the posthuman as an ever-present attendant of the human), and humanisms and the humanities are being variously re-capitulated and re-invented. The question then is *how* literature in general and Shakespeare in particular help us to think about existential questions. What is the specificity of literature in the way that it treats human life? In the case of *Love's Labour's Lost*, as with all literary texts, we have to reckon with form, genre and medium, and with the way its comedy encourages us to attend to love in distinctive and emotionally complex ways, as the provider simultaneously of mirth, anxiety and seriousness.

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## NOTES

1. Parts of this current essay are reproduced by kind permission of Edinburgh University Press from Andy Mousley, *Re-Humanising Shakespeare* [2007], 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press 2015, p. 112-124.
2. Desiderius Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, trans. Betty Radice, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1971, p. 94.
3. Simon Critchley, *On Humour*, London, Routledge, 2002, p. 102.
4. See Mousley, *Re-Humanising Shakespeare*, *op. cit.*
5. William Shakespeare, *Othello*, in *The Complete Works*, eds. John Jowett, William Montgomery, Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Oxford, OUP, 2005, I.iii.388-90.
6. Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, in *The Complete Works*, *op. cit.*, IV.iii.127-30. All subsequent references to the play in this edition are given within the text.
7. For an extended discussion of blushing, including its relevance to gender issues, see Brian Cummings, "Animal Passions and Human Sciences: Shame, Blushing and Nakedness in Early Modern Europe and the New World", in *At the Borders of the Human*, eds. Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert and Susan Wiseman, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999, p. 28-32.
8. C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1959, p. 92.



9. In Erasmus's text, Christian folly, for example, is wise folly: p. 188-208; scholastic obscurantism is foolish folly: p. 156; and self-love is a combination of both: p. 131-135 and *passim*.

10. Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, in *The Complete Works*, *op. cit.*, V.i.30-1.

11. See, for example, Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957, p. 163-186 and *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1965; C.L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1959; Edward Berry, *Shakespeare's Comic Rites*, Cambridge, CUP, 1984.

12. Simon May, *Love: a History*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2011, p. 6.

13. Stephen Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder", in his *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*, New York, Routledge, 1990, p. 165.

14. Arthur F. Marotti, "'Love is not Love': Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences and the Social Order", *English Literary History*, 49, 1982, 396-428; 398.

15. A similar point is made in Achsah Guibbory, "'Oh, let me not serve so': The Politics of Love in Donne's *Elegies*", *English Literary History*, 57, 1990, 811-33; 811. This essay is reprinted in Andrew Mousley, ed., *New Casebooks: John Donne*, London, Macmillan, 1999, p. 25-44.

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## ABSTRACTS

Love's labour is often lost in Shakespeare's (un)romantic comedy because love is folly and lovers, ridiculous. We know, however, that Shakespeare delights in paradoxes and reversals which alert us to the possibility of finding wisdom in folly and folly in self-professed wisdom. Given the insisted-upon interchangeability of wisdom and folly in Shakespeare's plays, how can we be confident of being able to tell them apart? If lovers are foolish in *Love's Labour's Lost* then what wisdom might there be in their folly? When Biron puts his mind to proving the value of love he makes various grandiose claims. One is that love 'adds a precious seeing to the eye'. Should we treat this as a truth or a seeming truth, a nugget of wisdom about the way love can 'deepen the sensation of being' (Peter May) or just another depthless, well-turned phrase? This paper explores the question of when and under what conditions love can be taken seriously in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Les peines d'amour sont souvent perdues dans la comédie (non)romantique de Shakespeare, car l'amour est folie et les amoureux, ridicules. Toutefois, nous savons que Shakespeare

affectionne les paradoxes et les renversements qui nous font prendre conscience que la folie peut receler une part de sagesse et la prétendue sagesse, une part de folie. Etant donné l'interchangeabilité de la sagesse et de la folie dans les pièces de Shakespeare, comment être sûr de pouvoir les distinguer ? Si les amants font preuve de folie dans *Peines d'amour perdues*, alors peut-être y a-t-il une certaine sagesse dans leur folie ? Lorsqu'il s'efforce de prouver la valeur de l'amour, Biron énonce quelques déclarations grandioses, dont une selon laquelle l'amour « donne à l'œil une précieuse seconde vue ». Doit-on voir là une vérité, même partielle, une once de sagesse relative à la façon dont l'amour peut « approfondir la sensation d'être » (Peter May), ou simplement une expression brillante de plus, dépourvue de toute profondeur ? Le présent article explore la question de savoir quand et à quelles conditions l'amour peut être considéré sérieusement dans *Peines d'amour perdues*.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** Peines d'amour perdues, amour, comédie, folie, narcissisme, ontologie

**Keywords:** comedy, folly, love, ontology, self-love, Love's Labour's Lost

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Exclusionary Male Space and the  
Limitations of Discursive  
Reasoning in *Love's Labour's Lost*

When the ‘tender juvenal’, Moth, explains to Armado that he can logically “study three years in / two words” (I.ii.52-53) his use of discursive reasoning, of absurd logic contained rhetorically, posits the linguistic manner by which the temporal and physical space of the play is determined. By reducing ‘three years’ to its representative ‘two words’ Moth demonstrates a temporal impossibility can—if one is persuasive enough—seem transformed by its linguistic signs. The play is rife with this kind of linguistic sleight of hand, but it ultimately proves ineffective. Indeed, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* has long been noted for its ‘playful’ and seemingly self-contained use of language—akin to linguistic sport—but not necessarily in conjunction with the problematic deferral of duty that such ‘sport’ conceals. <sup>1</sup> Often, critical arguments have sought to explain the ending of the play by means of understanding the (proposed) inaction of the play itself. The play toys with the concepts of reality and fiction, what is created by text and discourse and what is concealed, the world without and the world within. In the play itself, language masks a multitude of sins against patriarchal and humanist ideology—the delaying of governmental duty, improper use of education, and the ineffectiveness of securing marital bonds. The imaginative space of the knotted garden and the grounds of Navarre can be seen as “without” the reality of life and the patriarchal sanctions for the development of manhood and leadership. More so, however, it represents a fictive world in which the gentlemen of Navarre delay and defer their duties, revel in their

linguistic prowess, and practice literary modes of courtship. This is demonstrated through extensive rhetorical exercises. Indeed, the play borders textually upon *progymnasmata* —the methods of rhetorical training through exercise—and the textual surface of the play puts pressure on what can be the productive use, the final ends, to rhetorical flexing.

The “little academe” is only ever a hypothetical space in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* ; it represents the offstage reality of youth, which has passed, and is effectively outside of reach. In its place, is the space of deferral is the textual space of rhetorical exercise, signifying through their discourse the adolescent state of the King and his male court. My argument is that both the texture of the play and the social/political deferral through proposed masculine space, indicate the adolescent nature of the court. <sup>2</sup> Berowne’s own desire for deferral (argued as learning from experiential knowledge of the world, i.e. to court and flirt, to feast and revel) indicates that even he sees that the creation of exclusionary space for study is “out of season”:

BEROWNE. [...] Why should proud summer boast  
Before the birds have any cause to sing?  
Why should I joy in any abortive birth?  
At Christmas I no more desire a rose  
Than wish a snow in May’s newfangled shows,  
But like of each thing that in season grows.  
So you, *to study now* it is too late,  
Climb o’er the house to unlock the little gate.  
*Love’s Labour’s Lost* , I.i.102-109 [my emphasis]

And, indeed, in the trajectory of masculine development it is “too late” to study, as the language of the play itself demonstrates the exercise of rhetorical and dialectical modes (while also indicating a kind of stasis in the use of these modes). Thus, the Academe is proposed as a means not only to secure fame, and find grace in the

“disgrace of death”, but also as a means to delay duty, to be, “Still and contemplative in living art” (I.i.14).

At the very subscription of the oath, it is found that this space is not a viable form of exclusion or deferral. The Princess of France is to arrive at court, and the king dismisses the exclusionary space, “We must of force dispense with this decree / She must lie here on mere necessity” (I.i.145-146). Thus, the play depicts the position of an entirely exclusionary male space for knowledge acquisition, but this proposal proves to signify a stagnant—if not impossible—form of existence and a barren *locus* for intellectual advancement, the fruits of which being proposed so that, in the words of King Ferdinand, “Navarre shall be the wonder of the world” (I.i.12). Beyond this desired outcome, the “masculine” space is mentioned in the abstract, always figured offstage. The precepts outlined in the sworn oath attempt to make this space impermeable, but this eventually proves only that this space *cannot* exist without social and political implications.

The end result is that the texture and space of the play signifies the deferral of duty—the “problematic” ending breaks the spell of linguistic containment. The texture of the play, the rhetoric and discursive reasoning within the text, the “barren tasks” of the sworn oath, and the apparent permeability of such exclusionary masculine intellectual space—that is, a space subversive to social *mores* — ultimately come together to represent a deferral of duty, a prolonged state of adolescence. It is only outwith the action (or inaction) of the play, outwith the boundaries of the knotted garden, that there is a realization of the implications of such linguistic and physical spaces of adolescence. In this play, it is clear that the Academe (though failed) is antithetical to patriarchal hegemony, that the exercises of linguistic prowess extend the state of

adolescence, and that eventually love can be “lost” (or delayed) through a purposeful subversion of social codes (including the duties of a monarch and the patriarchal sanctions for marriage and good husbandry). Shakespeare uses language to put pressure on antithetical positions and creates a dialogue of elaborate contention to explore the hypothetical situation of a solely masculine, intellectually-based court.

The critical focus on *Love’s Labour’s Lost* has usually centred on the *copia* in linguistic exchange and the play’s reliance on witty dialogue and euphuistic language instead of plot structure. It is my argument that this discursive texture is meant to indicate the adolescent state of the court, and the ultimate failings at creating an effective and worthwhile exclusionary male space. Other critical approaches have focused on the intermingling of language with courtly game/sport in the context of courtship, the failings of grace and decorum, and even the idea that the text itself is a “prelude to the more extensive commentary on imagination in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* ”. <sup>3</sup> Others have examined manifestations of masculine desire, the “Shakespearean preposterous” event of men following women, and more often than not, critics return to the idea of the play’s so-called problematic ending. <sup>4</sup> Throughout all of these critical analyses, special attention has been paid to the language of the text. In my consideration, I focus on the language as a means to understand the thematics of prodigality and youthfulness, the idea that the playtext represents an adolescent state of “becoming”, and that the beginning and end of the play depict specific points in the trajectory of the humanist prerogatives for masculine development and that the texture of the playtext is itself representative of the rhetorical exercises of the adolescent state. These latter critical approaches, though also primarily focused on the play’s language do not take the

social implications of deferred duty and the problems of prolonged adolescence into consideration—these are sites of anxiety, and when the “abrupt” ending shatters the linguistically-created world of the play, it is then that the limits of discursive exercise are made most apparent.

It seems as if Irene G. Dash first proposed the idea of the “single-sex retreat” as a problematic feature of the play, as an oath bound to an idea with no physical referent.<sup>5</sup> However, her argument, which compares the proposed academe of Navarre to Margaret Cavendish’s *Convent of Pleasure*, fails to note the implications of a solely masculine court in comparison to the female space described in Cavendish’s work. The problem is not that of actualizing the “single-sex retreat”, but in the figure of exclusionary male space as a means to prolong the state of youth for the men of Navarre. It is no longer the season for this type of space, it is antithetical to “necessity”. This essay builds upon this observation, and responds to Anthony J. Lewis’s assertion that the play figures moderation in temperament, reason and life, the *via media*, as the moralizing answer to a problematic ending, the “temperate life” as “best for all seasons”.<sup>6</sup> Though critical work has moved away from trying to justify the abrupt ending of this play, it still seems to be a pervasive focus.<sup>7</sup> I aim to show that the play is only incomplete as it demonstrates gentlemanly life that is incomplete (by the standards of early modern patriarchal hegemony): *Love’s Labour’s Lost* follows the trajectory of masculine development, from schooling through adolescence, and ends in motion toward the solidification of “manhood”.

At the subscription to the oath, the male courtiers of Navarre claim not only a retreat from the pleasures of the world, but a deferral of their social and political duties as gentlemen. The semi-pastoral



landscape of the court grounds, on the outside of the proposed exclusionary space of the study, figures as an indication of the lords' true physical space. <sup>8</sup> They are not shut up in a study with their books, nor are they engaged in political affairs. Indeed, they are not even involved with the social sphere (which includes, but is not limited to, the establishment of households and suitable marriages). In the landscape of the garden and fields surrounding the court, the men are figured physically and figuratively in a state of "becoming", between youth and manhood, between their education and the use of this education in service to the state and in securing their courtly and social positions. The sworn oath deals with a very specific type of knowledge acquisition, that which *should* not be known. The desire to prolong youthful study to the ends of fame and wonder, does not appear as a proper pursuit for the court of Navarre. Indeed, one could conflate both the desired knowledge that the King describes (forbidden knowledge) with the desired experiential "knowledge" that Berowne utilizes to argue against book-learning (prodigal licentiousness). In both forms, these desires are juvenile, they indicate a desire for the deferral of duty, for prolonging neither productive nor useful study but merely the *status* of youth.

When Berowne inquires, "What is the end of study, let me know", the King merely replies, "Why, that to know which else we should not know" (I.i.55-56). This has been analysed by Eric Brown, who notes that the "parallel course" taken by both Marlowe (in *Doctor Faustus* ) and Shakespeare (in *Love's Labour's Lost* ) primarily deals with the ends of knowledge acquisition. What one *should* not know is what is most desired and Brown's critical analysis seems to hinge on the concept that both plays depict a desire for forbidden and, indeed, hidden knowledge: as both plays dislodge "the epistemological considerations of [...] academicians, both [also]

dislocate and overturn established authorities...”.<sup>9</sup> To know what one should not is precisely the kind of desire that posits the court as adverse to applicable and useful knowledge—the desired outcome of humanist education systems.<sup>10</sup> In this way, the creation of an exclusionary male space to acquire fame is “out of joint”. The problem, then, in attempting to formulate this exclusionary space deals with the epistemological limitations of academic courts. First, their knowledge is figured as abstract, and therefore the physical space is abstracted as well. Second, their desire to know what is forbidden can be likened to the desire to *experience* what is forbidden, both signs of youthful prodigality.

Louis Adrian Montrose notes a similar idea, stating, “Navarre and his book-men attempt to indefinitely prolong and extend the temporal and spatial limits of their play world.”<sup>11</sup> He sees the boundaries of the play’s action, the sporting with wit, and the language games as a kind of deferral, which disrupts the play’s (desired) comic end. In Montrose’s view, “[t]he imaginative world of study, dreams of fame, games, and courtship *within* the fiction is a counterworld to its primary, actual, and potentially tragic world of politics, finance, war, and mortality.”<sup>12</sup> However, I think it is problematic to first conflate the imaginative world depicted in the semi-pastoral setting of the play’s action with the proposed exclusionary space of the Academe, and then juxtapose these to the “realities” of death and duty figured at the play’s end. This dichotomy rejects the possibility that both the proposed Academe and the “play-world” of the text’s action can be seen as deferrals, not wholly imaginary, but figuring a prolonged youthful or adolescent state. The world of the play is an unsustainable existence between realities, that is, between points on the trajectory of masculine maturity. Indeed, the oath is first a means by which the courtiers of Navarre attempt to prolong their

youth. This, then, is figured as an offstage and *possible* reality, but one that is made null and void by their abstraction of the physical space and the “necessity” of the Princess’s arrival. Within the temporal limitations of the play, the newly established oath is the only referent to the proposed exclusionary male space. This, as it exists in the world offstage, can be seen as a symbolic point on the trajectory of masculine maturity. Education stands offstage at one end as the reality of youth, and political and financial duty, marriage, and ultimately death stand on the opposite side. The King and his lords are presented only in the prolonged state—first, of an attempted deferral through the acquisition of “forbidden” learning (antithetical to the humanistic pedagogy of applicable learning)—and then, within the action of the play in a space that figures as a threshold— a space between education of youth and the duties of manhood—situated in the semi-pastoral landscape of the knotted garden and the fields outside the court. They are between realities in the trajectory of development, antithetical to patriarchal hegemony.

13

But their duties, the repayment of debt and possible marital match between the princess and the King, function to permeate this desired deferral. The term, outlined in the oath, to not “talk with a woman within the term of three years” must be broken: as Berowne states, “This article, my liege, yourself must break, / For well you know here comes in embassy / The French King’s daughter with yourself to speak” (I.i.131-133). And as Boyet hints, by noting that the Princess is sent in embassy to “*Matchless Navarre*” (II.i.7; emphasis my own), her purposes for attending the court may be twofold: to collect on a debt of war and to see if the King is a possible marital “match”. Once the initial space outlined in the oath is shown to be an impossible deferral, the gentlemen insist on creating an alternate

space in-between by disallowing the women entrance into the court proper:

KING. You may not come, fair Princess, within my gates,  
But here without you shall be so received  
As you shall deem yourself lodged in my heart,  
Though so denied fair harbour in my house.

*Love's Labour's Lost* , II.i.171-174

This space of play and wit, of courtship and jest, is a space of prolonged adolescence, a retreat from the realities expected in the trajectory of gentlemanly life. As Richard Corum succinctly states, that “coming out right” (i.e. a conclusion of heteronormative marriage) “was a signal marker of social stability” while the deferral at the end of *Love's Labour's Lost* can be read as site which generates “powerful anxieties”.<sup>14</sup> All diplomatic duties are deferred or forgotten. The attempts at the beginning of the play to create a space in which the lords could escape consuming time, to gain grace in the eventuality of their deaths, is transposed onto this semi-pastoral landscape of adolescent “becoming”.

In his 1974 essay, Anthony J. Lewis claims that critics misidentified the problematic feature within the play: “[t]his insistence, either that the courtiers attempt first an incorrect or immature way of life and then a second more acceptable one or that the play finally condemns both choices, ignores the text and is misleading.”<sup>15</sup> He claims that the problem within the text is that the court of Navarre “err[s] neither in choosing the first method (study) nor the second (romance) but in choosing each exclusive of the other.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, there may be a good argument to be made in the need for “moderation”, but his assertion that study and romance are the two modes of existence that need to be reconciled in moderation fails to note the trajectory of masculine development in this period. As Alexandra Shepard has clearly identified through her socio-

historical work on early modern masculinity, moderation and temperance were an ideological ideal, but this ideal was part of a complicated system in which alternate duties were outlined as well.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis's claim that study and romance should be taken in equal measure obscures the aims of masculine maturity. He insists that Shakespeare's play becomes moralistic, arguing for the *via media* of temperate masculinity. However, two problems emerge when addressing the play in this manner. First, *Love's Labour's Lost* very carefully avoids a moralizing conclusion. Second, "study" in the abstract was a *foundational* activity in the making of gentlemen. It was the application of this study that marked the divide between the state of "becoming" and reaching maturity for well-born gentlemen. In the garden and fields of Navarre, the courtiers stand at the threshold of masculinity. Romance and linguistic sporting are markers of this status.

Logic and language are conflated within the text, but the discursive reasoning for exclusionary male space is a deferral of political and patriarchal duty. Even Berowne's argument *against* the creation of the academe depicts an attempt at deferring maturity—which is contained even within his speech. The copiousness of the building argument, the textbook *repetitio* of "Light seeking light doth light of light beguile", and the prompt to "*study me* how to please the eye indeed" all indicate the exercises of rhetorical rhetoric put into a display of (a rather empty) argument,

BEROWNE. Why, all delights are vain, but that most vain  
Which, with pain purchased, doth inherit pain:  
As painfully to pore upon a book  
To seek the light of truth, while truth the while  
Doth falsely blind the eyesight of his look.  
Light seeking light doth light of light beguile;  
So, ere you find where light in darkness lies,  
Your light grows dark by losing of your eyes.  
Study me how to please the eye indeed

By fixing it upon a fairer eye,  
Who dazzling so, that eye shall be his heed,  
And give him light that it was blinded by.

*Love's Labour's Lost*, I.i.72-79

In addition to the texture of this speech, its content also suggests an adolescent state. The courtiers first figure as prodigal schoolboys, basing their educational pursuit in acquiring fame through forbidden knowledge, and focusing on homosocial interaction devoid of social and political engagement. This is a regression back to a state of youth. Berowne's argument against such study (the pain of poring over a book, when the eyes of maidens can illuminate things so much better) leads to an alternate form of deferral: wanton courtship, witty puns, disguised pageantry, and jests (of all sorts). Soon the others find themselves forsworn.

Navarre's comment following Berowne's speech, "How well he's read, to reason against reading" (I.i.94) is a cue to their already highly-educated status. Through the use of their discursive reasoning, for sport, jest, and in wooing, the lords all demonstrate that they have mastered the necessary tools of linguistic manipulation and rhetorical persuasion and can put them to practical use. However, because the language is caught, like the men themselves, in this imaginative world, the usefulness of discursive prowess is absent: "In reason nothing" (Dumaine; I.i.98), to which Berowne counters, "Something then in rhyme" (I.i.99).

James L. Calderwood analyses the disconnect between language and reality in *Love's Labour's Lost*. He states, "[i]n perhaps no other play does language so nearly become an autonomous symbolic system whose value, somewhat like that of pure mathematics, lies less in its relevance to reality than in its intrinsic fascination."<sup>18</sup> The main argument that Calderwood makes in this critique is that Shakespeare passes from "a sensuous enchantment with language, a wantoning

with words, to a serious consideration of his medium, his art, and their relation to the social order.”<sup>19</sup> Thus this play becomes a kind of meta-narrative, reflecting on the art of composition and self-consciously testing the very limits of linguistic ability. However, the medium of language is shown to lack any kind of productive outcome if it is utilized for sport, jest, and jovial courtship. Though it can be argued that the lords (and the King) reach a point in the end of the play where their courtship contains truth—instead of empty words—, their discourse is ineffective because they cannot persuade the French Princess and her ladies that their words are more than “breath”. Indeed, the women seem fully aware, especially upon the arrival of the news of the King of France’s death, that the men of Navarre are still within the space of “becoming”, that they have yet to prove their abilities as possible husbands.

When the courtiers all discover that they have been unfaithful to their oath, the discursive reasoning takes an opposite turn. Berowne’s argument applies a series of complicated and connected clauses (as if he were stringing together commonplaces) in a seemingly logical structure:

BEROWNE. For wisdom’s sake, a word that all men love,  
Or for Love’s sake, a word that loves all men,  
Or for men’s sake, the authors of these women,  
Or women’s sake, by whom we men are men,  
Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves,  
Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths.

*Love’s Labour’s Lost*, IV.iii.326-331

The abundant and convoluted use of rhetorical devices, the neatness and contained effect of epanados, the mirroring effects of the use of symploce, suggest an attempt at a deductive form of proof—applying the general, given premises to the particular situation of the oath. However, it bends upon the defining features of the words themselves, and how they can be manipulated and moulded to

alternate meanings. It is clear that the purpose of such speech is rationalization, all of the men of court beseeching Berowne to find some trick of language to justify their forswearing of the first oath. This weak reasoning, built upon the deceptive and duplicitous nature of language, meagrely fulfils the new “necessity”.

Calderwood equates language with a kind of exchange as currency, “a valid linguistic currency must effectively unite what is meant with what is understood”,<sup>20</sup> and he makes this analogy significant in discussing the language of the men of Navarre: “[n]ot only has their linguistic currency become grossly inflationary, but they have even circulated a few bad bills in the form of impulsive oaths.”<sup>21</sup> This is verbal gambling at its worst, and can be a way by which to equate the masculine court of Navarre to prodigality. Indeed, even Rosaline mocks her gallant’s “prodigal wits” (V.ii.64). Berowne and the court of Navarre are subverting both the goals of humanist education (the practical application of rhetoric and dialectic in the conducting of political affairs) and the socio-patriarchal codes of good husbandry. They dedicate their language to sport and pleasure, gambling with their words. In this way, they are—from the onset—prodigals, deferring their duty (and indeed missing the mark) of masculine maturity: securing a household and attending to the affairs of state.<sup>22</sup>

Court life and the masculine ideal of marriage are two main goals of the early modern humanist education system. Lorna Hutson argues that, “‘good husbandry’ was a figure for practical efficacy of a humanistic education in classical literature”<sup>23</sup> Suspended in their adolescent state, arguing for the best means to achieve fame, the lords confine themselves to the “barren tasks” of a prolonged youth indeed. However, the sporting volley of language and the mirth it creates are the foundation of this play and the source of its pleasure.



Calderwood rightly claims, “[u]ntil it becomes a bridge effectively uniting lover with beloved, purport with understanding, the scholars’ language will remain inadequate and untrue.” This criticism of ineffective linguistic sport reveals the anxieties of misuse of language and misrule that govern the adolescent status of the scholars.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the play is tinged with real anxieties about misrule, misuse of education, and wayward courtship: the men of Navarre will not yet gain their loves because language does not effectively bridge the two parties. Yet it is the fact that language is so duplicitous and mutable, that produces mirth within the bounds of the imaginative world of Navarre and the play itself. Descent of rhetoric into mere play is another example of the court’s prodigality, though the thematics of prodigality as described by Helgerson were always exploited to depict the possibility for redemption and this possibility is obscured by the play’s problem of prolonged deferral. The danger in the play is the continued use of language without a logically sound argument, or language without a material referent, the danger of its becoming merely “words, words, words”.

In many ways the court holds a precarious position between the lords’ initial desire to become prodigal schoolboys, and their decision to form a prolonged state of adolescence, of homosocial interaction, sporting courtship and infinite jests, out of mere “necessity”. According to pedagogical texts and rhetorical training manuals of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the ultimate ends for learning was the development of gentlemen (the learned elite) prepared for service to the state, and to lead them on a path for acquiring virtue in this service. Though the play deals with the proposal of a French academe (a very different “institution” of the period) the play clearly deals with the anxious ideas concerning the ends of education (and deferral of duties). This is derived from the classical

tradition—and is pervasive enough in England to enter the vernacular in texts such as Thomas Elyot's *The booke Named the Governour* and as built in to the in the humanist (and expressly Protestant) rhetorical manual, Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique*.<sup>25</sup> Elyot's text is primarily useful in this investigation as it is clearly concerned with the nobility (and gentlemanly elite). In the prologue to the 1534 edition (in address to Henry VIII), he states, "And for as muche as this presente booke treateth of the educacion of them [i.e. the gentry] that hereafter maie be deemed worthy to be gouverneurs of the publike weale under youre highnesse".<sup>26</sup> Wilson's dedicatory address to Lord John Dudley makes a similar claim by use of exemplum with the story of Cineas "a notable Oratour and sometimes scholar" who is able to persuade the peaceable handing-over of "castles and fortresses" to the captain for battle against the Romans. The point of this exemplum was that through learned oratory "what worthier thing can there be, the with a word to winne cities and & whole countries".<sup>27</sup> The concept is not necessarily that language replace armies, but that the power of education's ends is the ability to control, to lead, to 'win' cities, and indeed to be able to serve and control the state. When the state *itself* is "misusing" education, this is a clear indication of the anxiety of misrule woven into the text. The stagnation of the court of Navarre is indicative not of a completely fictive play-world (as Louis Montrose claimed) but a hypothetical imagining of a court that has purposefully withdrawn from political concerns.<sup>28</sup> In this way, the position of "becoming" in the semi-pastoral landscape is not a merely frivolous game, but it demonstrates cultural anxieties about prodigality in the courtly and ruling sphere. The King clearly sees the Academe through a humanist pedagogical lens, while Berowne's

own idea is to learn what is forbidden through what is forbidden in the oath itself:

BEROWNE. Come on then, I will swear to study so  
To know the thing I am forbid to know:  
As thus, to study where I well may dine,  
When I to feast expressly am forbid;  
Or study where to meet some mistress fine,  
When mistresses from common sense are hid;  
Or, having sworn too hard-a-keeping oath,  
Study to break it, and not break my troth.  
[...]

KING. These be the stops that hinder study quite,  
And train our intellects to vain delight.

*Love's Labour's Lost*, I.i.59-66, 70-71

In his response against the waywardness of feasting and womanizing, the King reproves the language of prodigality. However, though he replicates the humanist counter-argument towards misuse of education, he is not posing himself as the director of the Academe: he is rather taking a specific patriarchal stance against the prodigal waywardness that Berowne figures. Berowne's desire to "study" the experiential fails as an Aristotelian discursive reasoning: it stands against patriarchal normative codes to which the King eludes. Yet as the play unfolds, it is clear that both modes are ineffective in obtaining the main goals of masculine development: securing households and utilizing practical knowledge in service to the state. The efficacy of a regression to homosocial learning, to obtaining what one *should* not know, is as reductive as the game-play of courtship within the play.

Helgerson outlines the changing dynamics of humanistic educational thought from the mid-1500s through the late 1500s, analysing the changing way in which the "prodigal son" story appears in literature and drama over this time. <sup>29</sup> He notes, first, the very tumultuous times in which the fictional pattern of the prodigal son appears. At a time of economic strain, religious upheaval, and uncertainty, this

discourse began as a way for the older (humanist) generations to warn of the problems of prodigality in the younger. It automatically aligned a kind of “wayward” lifestyle to the “wanton” expression of intellect through—what, interestingly enough, the King of Navarre marks as—“vain delights” (I.i.71). The main humanist ideal for education was that young gentlemen would learn oration and style as a means to *begin* their lives as a service to the state. When these humanist skills were used to produce poetry, plays, or the like, it was perceived as a direct challenge to the goals of their education. In the same way, the courtiers of Navarre, by “reasoning against reading”, secretively forswearing fidelity to the oath, arguing the contrary, manipulating words, composing euphuistic Petrarchan sonnets, mocking the play of the Nine Worthies, and ultimately playing games with language and alternate characters, are clearly depicted as prodigals.

When they first arrive in Navarre, the Princess and her ladies are intrigued by the gentlemen of Navarre’s court: Boyet’s comment makes it clear that the “matchless” king has been marked as a possible suitor for the Princess. However the Princess shows little interest in courtship, a disdain for flattery, and ultimately a level-headed approach to securing a husband. As courtship is not the purpose of attending the court in the first place, and reality of death is what calls them away, the female characters of the play represent a calling towards maturity, though they are swept up in the fun and games of the semi-pastoral space. Upon arrival, they counter at each point love’s conceits created by the courtiers: though they admire their “wit”, they are inclined to do business and deal with “reality” before losing themselves in the imaginative sphere that has been created in the court of Navarre. Mark Breitenberg asserts that the “Princess exposes the falseness of Petrarchan flattery” by depicting

these conceits as hollow, “barren tasks” indeed, like the men’s proposed assignment in the first proposed oath, in sharp contrast to the realities of political economies (the payment of debts) and the inevitability of the end of life (the reality of death, as figured offstage).<sup>30</sup> The Princess says both, “We are wise girls to mock our lovers so” (V.ii.58) and when the men plan to arrive dressed as “Muscovites” to woo them, “The effect of my intent is to cross theirs. / They do it but in mocking merriment, / And mock for mock is only my intent ” (V.ii.138-140). Thus, the men’s courtship is always only seen as sport, and the women will match them only for sport, “There’s no such sport as sport by sport o’erthrown ” (V.ii.153). The women see this courtship as frivolity, as sport. In this way they do not recognise the courtiers (and the King) of Navarre as sincere suitors, or indeed as serious and socio-politically engaged, as men ready to secure a household and undertake gentlemanly duty.

Perhaps it is Holofernes, in his pedantic manner, who recognizes the lack of social civility and gentlemanliness of the court’s style as an indication of their youthful, prodigal natures. It is fitting that the pedant should bring this to the fore, cementing the gentlemen’s figured position as adolescent. In their mocking response to the performance of the ‘Nine Worthies’, Holofernes finds their behaviour (and the style of their speech) antithetical to the manner of gentlemanly conduct, “This is not generous, not gentle, not humble” (V.ii.623). Thomas Greene analyses the play in the context of “grace” in the period, but ultimately bases his main critique on style: “[i]t is concerned with *styles* , modes of language and gesture and action which befit, in varying degrees, the intercourse of civilized people [...]. Only at the end, and much more surprisingly, does it turn out to reflect the failure of all style.”<sup>31</sup> The ending of the play does not, however, depict the failure of all style, but a

failure of “style-misused”. Rhetorical persuasion, on the part of Navarre and his men, does not fail, it is rather that *decorum* having largely been ignored, it is disjointed from the actual, necessary objectives of courtly men. Their linguistic prowess is clear, but it is out of place and time, or rather caught within the imaginative sphere of stagnant youth, of the pastoral ‘inbetweenness’. As the French Princess and her ladies depart, Greene asserts that “[w]e must always be able to assume that the gentlemen are salvageable as social animals and potential husbands, and need only the kind of education provided by laughter and the penances to which, at the close, they are assigned.”<sup>32</sup> However, it is not laughter that finally provides their education. It is the sobering reality that life exists beyond the semi-pastoral world of the prolonged adolescence that they have inhabited. Exclusionary male space is barren, but the penance for prodigality is hopeful.

Critics often note the symmetry of oaths from the onset of the imagined Academe to the penance dispensed to each male courtier by the ladies of France in the ending. It is often seen as a closure that directly mirrors the opening, holding the same anxieties of oath breaking. This anxiety is made clear when the ladies voice their fear that their matches will once again be forsworn. However, the final tasks presented to the men of Navarre, their new labours, are singular. Their new oaths are not mutual, the exclusionary male space that they hoped to inhabit at the start is completely disbanded as they must serve their new penances singularly. Though the anxiety that they individually will not undertake these tasks, or uphold their new oaths, is indeed still present, the singularity displayed in the closure indicates a kind of maturity of masculinity: the courtiers are no longer grouped as schoolboys turning away to their books, or as fellows jesting in a state of adolescence, but are

made to undertake tasks specific to their main follies. In this way, the imagined exclusionary male space is finally dismantled and the courtiers must surface from the fictive world of jest and sport. It is a step towards the winning of love.

In sum, Navarre is a world of linguistic adolescence where the realities of death, of debts, and indeed, of good husbandry are not found. The labours presented within the playtext are shown as a parody, they hint at the Herculean task of winning love by twisted language and sport alone. However, as the play concludes, it is clear that there must be form to the matter, a referent to the sign, reality for the imaginative. The great and true labours are to unfold outside the playtext: they are the things of life and are “too long for a play” (Berowne, V.ii.866).

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## NOTES

1. Louis Adrian Montrose, "Sport by sport o'erthrown': *Love's Labour's Lost* and the Politics of Play", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 18, No. 4 (Winter, 1977), 528-552.
2. Richard Corum, "The Catastrophe Is a Nuptial': *Love's Labour's Lost*, Tactics, Everyday Life", in *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt, eds., Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999, p. 271.
3. See James L. Calderwood, "Love's Labour's Lost: A Wantoning with Words", *Studies in English Literature*, Vol. 5, No. 2. (Spring, 1965), 317-332; Trevor Lennam, "The ventricle of memory': Wit and Wisdom in *Love's Labour's Lost*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 24, No. 1 (Winter, 1973), 54-60; Louis Adrian Montrose, *op. cit.*; Thomas M Greene, "Love's Labour's Lost: The Grace of Society", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 22, No. 4 (Autumn, 1971), 215-328; Joseph Westlund, "Fancy and Achievement in *Love's Labour's Lost*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 18, No.1 (Winter, 1967), 27-46.
4. See Mark Breitenberg, "The Anatomy of Masculine Desire in *Love's Labour's Lost*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 43, No. 4 (Winter, 1992), 430-449; Patricia Parker, "Preposterous Events", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 43, No. 2 (Summer, 1992), 186-213.
5. Irene G. Dash, "Single-Sex Retreats in Two Early Modern Dramas: *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Convent of Pleasure*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 47, No. 4 (Winter, 1996), 387-395. In this essay she outlines the lack of any physical description of the "academe" as it is presented within the play.
6. Anthony J. Lewis, "Shakespeare's Via Media in *Love's Labour's Lost*", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 16, No. 2 (1974), 248.
7. H.R. Woudhuysen, in *The Arden Shakespeare* version of the play (London and New York, Bloomsbury, 1998) notes the connections in this play to Philip Sidney's work in *The New*



*Arcadia*, concluding that the ‘abrupt’ endings in both texts are indicative of specific Renaissance stylistics. See Introduction, p. 2-7.

8. I use the term ‘semi-pastoral’ as an indication of the space outwith the courts setting, yet not developed as a green space, such as the forest of Arden in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*. In this way, it is a conscious space created beyond the court but not without the social necessities of courtly duty.

9. Eric C. Brown, “Shakespeare’s Anxious Epistemology: *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*”, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 45, No. 1 (Spring, 2003), p. 20-21.

10. See Richard Helgerson’s *The Elizabethan Prodigals*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976 for instances of subversion of humanist educational purposes. Also, for a rigorous account of humanist education systems, see Mike Pincombe’s *Elizabethan Humanism: Literature and Learning in the Late Sixteenth Century*, London, Longman, 2001.

11. Montrose, *op. cit.*, p. 542.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 543.

13. See Alexandra Shepard’s *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003 for a cultural analysis of ‘manhood’ in the period and “From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500-1700”, *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 44, No. 2 (2005), 281-295 for an analysis of ‘alternate’ masculinities.

14. Corum, *op. cit.* p. 271.

15. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

17. Though certainly not the first to assert this claim, Alexandra Shepard makes a very strong argument for the divergent forms of “masculinity” in contention with these ideals (primarily found in conduct literature or alternate homiletic narratives) in *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (*op. cit.*) and “From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500-1700” (*op. cit.*).

18. Calderwood, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 318.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 326.

**21.***Ibid.*

**22.** My understanding of the “problems” of prodigality, from a humanist perspective, is derived from Richard Helgerson, *op. cit.* .

**23.** Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer’s Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth Century England* , London and New York, Routledge, 1994 p. 56.

**24.** Calderwood, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

**25.** Thomas Elyot, *The boke Named the Gouvernour*, London, 1534 and Thomas Wilson *The Arte of Rhetorique* , London, 1553.

**26.** Elyot, *op. cit.*, sig A2<sup>V</sup>.

**27.** Wilson, *op. cit.*, sig A1<sup>r</sup>-A2<sup>v</sup>.

**28.** Montrose, *op. cit.*, p. 528-552.

**29.** Helgerson, *op. cit.*

**30.** Breitenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 441.

**31.** Greene, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

**32.***Ibid.*, p. 317.

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## ABSTRACTS

*Love's Labour's Lost* depicts a hypothetical position of an entirely exclusionary male space for knowledge acquisition. I examine the implications, through analysis of discursive reasoning within the text, of the "barren tasks" of the sworn oath, and the apparent failure of such exclusionary intellectual space. In this play it is clear that the Academe is antithetical to patriarchal hegemony, that the play world is caught in a state of adolescent "becoming", and that eventually love can be lost (or delayed) through a purposeful subversion of social codes. In this way, the male space that is imagined is proposed as a continuation of youthful education systems, the space of the play depicts a prolonged state of adolescence (and prodigality), and the ending depicts the necessary means to move forward in the trajectory of gentlemanly 'manhood.'

*Peines d'amour perdues* met en scène l'hypothèse d'un espace masculin entièrement consacré à l'acquisition du savoir, à l'exclusion de toute autre activité. À travers l'analyse du raisonnement discursif au sein du texte, cet article étudie les conséquences logiques des « tâches arides » mentionnées dans le serment prêté par les hommes de Navarre et l'échec apparent d'un espace intellectuel ainsi fondé sur l'exclusion. Il apparaît clairement que l'« Académie » est incompatible avec l'hégémonie patriarcale, que la force des émotions triomphe même chez les plus « rationnels » et que l'amour peut être perdu (ou du moins différé) par la subversion délibérée des codes sociaux. Ainsi, l'espace masculin envisagé se comprend dans la lignée des systèmes d'éducation conçus pour les enfants, la pièce mettant en scène une adolescence prodigue prolongée ; la fin présente les moyens nécessaires au passage des gentilshommes à l'âge « adulte ».

# INDEX

**Keywords:** education, homosocial, humanism, knowledge, Love's Labour's Lost, masculinity, prodigality

**Mots-clés:** connaissance, éducation, homosocial, humanisme, masculinité, Peines d'amour perdues, prodigalité

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# L'identité et l'altérité

*Identity and Otherness*

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# Don Adriano de Armado: a Spanish Character on the English Stage

Mélodie Garcia

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From the onset of the play, Armado jars amidst the other characters: “Don Adriano de Armado, an affected Spanish braggart.”<sup>1</sup> His very long name typographically stands out in the list of characters, just as Armado will stand out in the comedy, taking up a lot of textual, verbal and stage space. Moreover, Don Armado is the only character in the whole Shakespearean corpus to be so heavily defined from the beginning: “an *affected Spanish braggart*” (my emphasis).<sup>2</sup> While this twofold definition shapes our expectations as it defines the character, it also contributes to narrow down the role of Armado to that of a fantastical and entertaining jester that will reappear sporadically throughout the play. The colourful Spaniard is syntactically caught between those two words just as any actor’s performance and rendering of Armado will tend to be limited by them. In this respect, it is telling that his character should not have drawn much critical attention,<sup>3</sup> as he is often read according to this somewhat misleading preliminary definition<sup>4</sup>. However, Armado has much more influence and weight in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* than what those somewhat reductive characterizations lead us to expect.

The first point which is important to understand the character of Armado is the presence of an actual Spaniard at the Elizabethan court who displayed many features reminiscent of Armado: Antonio Pérez,<sup>5</sup> who was so much like the caricatures of Spaniards that circulated in England at the time that this topical reference enables the dramatist to move effortlessly from the actual contemporary to the ethnotype.

Yet, Armado is not merely a referential wink at a contemporary. The very name of the character points out his synecdochic value: Don Adriano de Armado is not just a burlesque of Antonio Pérez – and, through him, of Spaniards –, he works as a synecdoche of his country and is representative of the way Spain was pictured in England after the defeat of the Invincible Armada his name recalls.

Those apparently contradictory functions where the character is caught between individuality and generalization trigger a form of imbalance which Shakespeare uses to escape both topical references, Pérez and the Spaniard, in order to make a type out of the ethnotype. In a play whose primary concern is language and its abuses, the talkative Don Armado works not so much as a representation of Spain than as a representation of human nature: in *Love's Labour's Lost*, every character shares common features with Armado.

## 1. A parody of Antonio Pérez and of Spaniards

Antonio Pérez was an extravagant figure. He was the trusted Secretary of State to Philip II, but after a complicated string of events involving murder, treason and jousts of influences, he fell out of favour and was imprisoned. He managed to escape and fled to

France. He then disembarked in England in April 1593 <sup>6</sup> . The journey was made in agreement with Henri IV to plead with Elizabeth for an alliance with France which would involve the active participation of England in a naval attack on the Spanish coast. Antonio Pérez was thus a godsend for the war party . However, although Perez was a great political and rhetorical tool, he was also a man whose personality had so many striking aspects that he had become a target for satire, and this is what he is used for in Love's Labour's Lost. From the various sources that have come down to us, he appears as a fantastical man, full of complicated words and sentences. The first depiction made of Armado in the play is striking:

KING. [...] Our court, you know, is haunted,  
With a refined traveller of Spain,  
A man in all the world new fashions planted,  
That hath a mint of phrases in his brain.  
One who the music of his own vain tongue  
Dot ravish like enchanting harmony.  
(I.i.160-65)

This appears as the living portrait of the Spaniard, “court” functioning here as a dual reference both to the court of Navarre and to the actual court of England. In the same way, the King addresses the characters on stage through the pronoun “you” while, simultaneously, the actor reaches out to the audience.

Pérez also tended to overestimate the importance of his own fate. In one of his letters, he states: “No debe de haber en la tierra rincón ni escondrijo adonde no haya llegado el sonido de mis persecuciones y aventuras.” <sup>7</sup> Similarly, he was inclined to put forward his numerous royal connections, just like Armado exaggerates in the play his intimacy with the King of Navarre: “Sir, the king is a noble gentleman, and my familiar, I do assure ye, very good friend: for what is inward between us, let it pass” (V.i.90-92). The identification

of Armado with Pérez is strengthened when Nathaniel and Holofernes meet and describe him as follows: “HOLOFERNES. [...] He is too picked, too spruce, too affected, too odd, as it were, too peregrinate as I may call it” (V.i.12-14). The last adjective, emphasized by its sheer length which weighs down the end of the sentence, is also highlighted by the metadiscursive comment, “as I may call it”. This insistence is a solid piece of evidence that Shakespeare caricatures the Spanish minister as it alludes to his favourite pseudonym which he used for his literary works, namely Raphael Peregrino.<sup>8</sup> In fact, Nathaniel deems Holofernes’s newly coined word so memorable that he takes his notebook to record “a most singular and choice epithet” (V.i.16). Such emphasis suggests the existence of a topical allusion. But what does Shakespeare make of this association?

Pérez was probably not known by the entire audience, since he was confined to a courtly or at least literary public. Consequently, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* constantly resorts to the Spaniard’s caricature to ridicule both the courtier and Spaniards in general. Indeed, Armado’s rhetoric seems to work as a direct echo to both Pérez and Spaniards. Pérez was famous in England for at least two literary works, his *Relaciones*<sup>9</sup> (1591) and, maybe even more so because the originals were widely circulated before publication, his *Epistles* (1603). Both works are marked by a very complicated style, full of hyperboles, enumerations, and the abundant use of parenthetical clauses that recall the English euphuistic style. Spanish literature was then known in England notably through the ornate poems of Góngora. The Spanish poet often resorted to complicated neologisms and a hardly intelligible syntax, often mocked by his contemporaries. If his ornate language was sometimes perceived as worth emulating, it was, when pushed to its limits, regarded as

deceitful. Indeed, it was considered to be the consequence of the inherently dissembling nature of the Spanish people, merely using language as an impediment to understanding. The fact that Armado first comes on stage through words with the King's description, but above all through *written* words, through a letter, thus takes on a new meaning. Indeed, in his letters, his style appears as a direct burlesque of Pérez's writing and of the Spaniards' tricky discourse in general. This is illustrated in Armado's first missive which sets the tune for his use of language and the perception the others have of it throughout the rest of the play:

KING. [...] There did I see that low-spirited swain, that base minnow of thy mirth,'—

COSTARD. Me?

KING. 'that unlettered small-knowing soul,'—

COSTARD. Me?

KING. [Reads] 'that shallow vassal,'—

COSTARD. Still me?

FERDINAND. 'which, as I remember, hight Costard,'—

COSTARD. O, me!

(I.i.241-50)

The difficulty Costard has to understand who Armado is writing about echoes the idea that it was always difficult to know what Spaniards were talking about. Periphrasis and delaying strategies are precisely what structures Armado's letter, and they are recurrently emphasised by Costard's interventions that go crescendo. The clown thus reflects here the reader's baffled reaction when discovering Pérez's prose or Góngora's poems.

The alien nature of Armado's language is also conveyed by pronunciation. Characters throughout the play have trouble pronouncing his name, and their constant hesitations emphasize the fact that it is unusual in the English tongue. Dull, for instance, never manages to utter it properly: "Señor Arm- Arm- commends you"

(I.i.185). If the English characters have trouble with his Spanish name, Armado similarly distorts the pronunciation of English words:

ARMADO. Chirrah!  
HOLOFERNES. Quare chirrah, not sirrah?  
(V.i.32-33)

Although many interpretations were offered to explain this instance of mispronunciation, the most relevant one is that “Chirrah” is the distortion of the word “Sirrah” by an ignorant Spaniard. To support this view, Ungerer quotes a similar device used in *Blurt, the Master Constabl*<sup>10</sup>. When Lazarillo asks Blurt for permission to be admitted into town, his pronunciation evokes that of Armado: “I do unpenthouse the roof of my carcass, and touch the knee of thy office, in Spanish compliment: I desire to sojourn in your *chitty*” (I.ii, my emphasis). Here, the scatological play on words creates a comic effect and contributes to caricaturing the Spaniards’ way of handling the English tongue.

This example shows that caricaturing Pérez consequently often means falling in the tracks of the Spanish ethnotype in general, as Pérez shared many of the characteristics England attributed to Spaniards. By dealing with Pérez, Shakespeare kills two birds with one stone. Those in the audience on whom the reference to Pérez might be lost would still understand the playwright’s mocking allusions to Catholic Spain. However, by naming his character Armado, Shakespeare enables him to be more than just a jester aimed at making the audience smile. Indeed, Armado cannot be reduced to Pérez, or to a set of supposedly Spanish characteristic features: he also embodies Spain as a nation.

2. From “traveller” (I.i.161) to “empire”  
(I.i.167): Armado as a synecdoche of Spain

From the very beginning, Armado is attributed a number of ambiguous features closely linking him to Spain <sup>11</sup>. Let us quote the first reference to him again:

KING. Our court, you know, is haunted  
By a refined traveller of Spain,  
A man in all the world's new fashion planted,  
That hath a mint of phrase in his brain.  
One who the music of his own vain tongue  
Doth ravish like enchanting harmony;  
A man of complements, whom right and wrong  
Have chose as an empire of their mutiny.  
(I.i.160-67)

The “New World”, as well as the words “plantation” and “umpire” are obvious allusions to Spain, so much so that Don Armado is presented here as a miniature of his country, or a mini “umpire”, so to speak. The fact that a character representing Spain should be called Armado hints at the specific view taken on Spain. This name obviously refers to the Armada and would have caught the attention of any English man or woman in the audience . The reference would have been all the more obvious that the alteration we easily detect today, from Armad *a* to Armad *o* , would not have been perceived as such by an English audience, as the unstressed vowel of the suffix “-ada” was easily rounded to the more homely sound of an “o” <sup>12</sup> . For those who would have missed the reference, the King makes it even more explicit a moment later. Indeed, less than twenty lines after having clearly linked Armado with Spain and its power as an empire, the King designates him as “the magnificent Armado” (I.i.188), a phrase commonly used to refer to the Spanish fleet that could not have gone unnoticed. However, in naming his character so, Shakespeare had more in mind than just pointing out to the audience that his character was Spanish. It was above all a way to

reduce England's arch-enemy to one of its most stinging failures the better to ridicule it.

The Armada episode (1588) had an enormous impact in England. The impressive Spanish fleet, helped by the experience it had gathered in the seas of the New World and preceded by all the horrors circulated by what was termed afterwards the Black Legend <sup>13</sup> was defeated by the tiny English Navy. The explosion of joy and, conversely, of nasty satire, can be easily measured if one considers the number of pamphlets and general references to the Armada in the aftermath of its failure. The unexpected victory, considering the unequal balance of forces, was not only explained by the Will of God, protecting the true faith, that is to say England's, but above all by the Spaniards' supposed cowardice. According to historian William Maltby: The Armada added two vices hitherto unthought of by earlier propagandists: cowardice and incompetence. At first sight, it seems unaccountable since by minimizing the fighting abilities of the Spaniards, the writers were at the same time diminishing the glory of those who had defeated them. But the Armada was obviously not the end of the conflict with Spain and the English people, brought up on tales of Spanish prowess, needed to be reassured that the failure of the Armada was not an isolated incident but a symbol of Spanish decay. <sup>14</sup>

This is precisely what Armado stands for: Spain is no longer a powerful enemy that has to be feared, it can at last be mocked. One of the many instances of Armado's ridicule backs this interpretation since it directly refers to the then proverbial cowardice of Spaniards, and thus associates the character with the failure of the Armada. This link becomes especially telling when studied alongside a pamphlet published at the time.



On Pérez's arrival in England, a pamphlet entitled *A Fig for the Spaniard* was penned. It briefly related Pérez's vicissitudes at the hands of the obviously incredibly cruel Philip II and was meant to fuel national anti-Spaniard hatred. One passage is worth mentioning here since it tells the anecdote of a brawl occurring between a Portuguese and a Spaniard:

A Portingal gentleman walking in the Roceio of Lisbon espied a base Castilion of such proud and presumptuous demenor, so fantastical in his attire, loftie in his looks, and slow in his pace (as though he had bin treading of measures) could no longer bear him but bearded him and insulted him.<sup>15</sup>

The passage clearly echoes that of Armado, as both descriptions tap into the same ethnotype. A description follows of others Spaniards (who were revelling at the same moment in a nearby brothel, so that the picture of Spanish vices should be complete) coming to their friend's rescue, but eventually taking to their heels and fleeing. The end of the anecdote chimes with the aborted fight between Costard and Armado, a fight which never takes place because of the latter's cowardice:

ARMADO. Gentlemen and soldiers, pardon me; I will not combat in my shirt.  
DUMAINE. You may not deny it: Pompey hath made the challenge.  
ARMADO. Sweet bloods, I both may and will.  
BIRON [BEROWNE]. What reason have you for't?  
ARMADO. The naked truth of it is, I have no shirt; I go woolward for penance.  
BOYET. True, and it was enjoined him in Rome for want of linen [...]  
(V.ii.697-70)

The reference to Catholic Rome strengthens the alienness of Armado precisely when he is ridiculed for his cowardice. Just like the Castilians of the pamphlet, Armado first shows "extreme heat of choler"<sup>16</sup> before finding a way out when he realises his opponent is actually willing to see their quarrel through. Both the play and the

pamphlet re-enact the fall of the enemy they used to fear through apparently meaningless anecdotes. In Shakespeare's comedy, the "Nemean lion's roar" (IV.i.87) no longer frightens England but excites her laughter<sup>17</sup>.

### 3. An embodiment of "the great feast of language" (V.i.36-37)

However, if Armado works as the synecdoche of his country, the characteristics attributed to him are actually common to most of the characters in the *Love's Labour's Lost*. In a play whose utmost concern is language and its uses, Armado's intricate syntax and complicated words are as much a caricature of Pérez and the Spaniards as of the style of almost every other character. This reversal, from ethnotype to type, is best seen in the Princess's reaction. Her response to Armado's refined language stresses his alienness while the parallel dialogue between Armado and the King undermines it:

ARMADO. (*to the King*) Anointed, I implore so much expense of thy royal sweet breath as will utter a brace of words.

[*Armado and the King speak apart*]

PRINCESS. (*to Biron [Berowne]*) Doth this man serve God?

BIRON [BEROWNE]. Why ask you?

PRINCESS. He speaks not like a man of God's making.

ARMAD O . That is all one, my fair, sweet, honey monarch, for, I protest, the schoolmaster is exceeding fantastical, too-too vain, too-too vain. But we will put it, as they say, to *fortuna de la guerra* . I wish you the peace of mind, most royal complement.

(V.ii.519-52)

Ironically, the Princess mentions the intricate and pretentious speech of Armado precisely when the latter is complaining about Holofernes's vanity and the way the schoolmaster has handled the embedded play they are about to perform. Moreover, he ends his

aside with the King on a Spanish phrase: “we will put it, as they say, to *fortuna de la guerra*”. The apposition “as they say” distanciates Armado from the rest of the Spaniards, thereby diminishing his own foreignness. Moreover, he is the one to put an end to the conversation with the King, just as he is the one who calls for silence when tongues go mad during his performing of Mars exclaiming: “Peace!” (5.2.643) and trying to discipline the lords and to check their unreined recourse to language<sup>18</sup>.

Similarly, when Holofernes describes Armado, he strikingly refers to a literary type, and not to an ethnotype: “*Novi hominum tanquam te* . His humour is lofty, his discourse peremptory, his tongue filed, his eye ambitious, his gait majestic, and his general behavior vain, ridiculous, and thrasonical” (V.i.9-12). Holofernes starts by drawing a parallel between Armado and Nathaniel (“I know the man as well as I know you”), thus suppressing Armado’s alienness by confusing both identities. He then ends his sentence with the reference to a well-known dramatic type, the braggart<sup>19</sup>. This reference turns Armado into a more universal character than just a Spaniard. Even though he is characterized as a Spaniard, he has much more in common with the rest of the characters that they would like to admit. For instance, Armado’s soliloquy in I.ii evokes and announces all the written production the lords read to the audience: “Assist me, some extemporal god of rhyme, for I am sure I shall turn sonnet. Devise wit, write pen, for I am for whole volumes, in folio” (I.ii.174-76). This reference to the play’s materiality highlights the metatheatrical resonance of Armado’s statement and proves that he is not so much a representation of Pérez or Spain as a mirror to the other characters and a key to the play<sup>20</sup>. He seems to be present on stage even when he is not physically there. He is indeed present through words, either those of his own letters or those of the other

characters when they refer to him. More generally speaking, Armado turns out to be a living comment on the abuses of language so frequent in the comedy: confusing dialogues, messages that never reaches their intended audience, or pointless discourses. On top of that, Armado utters the final lines of the play, which underlines his conclusive function : “The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo. You that way, we this way” (V.ii.913-14). Significantly, his closing observation still deals with “words”, emphasizing once last time, as the play draws to its end, his special connection to language.

His handling of language, at first strongly attributed to his Spanish origins, thus makes Armado a synecdoche not so much of Spain, but of the play as well. The numerous echoes and strategies of substitution between the various groups of men in the play have been much studied. Holofernes and Nathaniel, the pedant and the curate, give the key to the lords’ use of language by caricaturing them. Armado works the same way, as his foreignness brings some comic elements to the general reflection on language while being cathartically ridiculous for an English audience galvanized by the memory of the Great Armada.

## Conclusion: Foreign men and pretended foreigners in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*

BIRON [BEROWNE]. [...] in the afternoon  
We will with some strange pastime solace them,  
Such as the shortness of the time can shape;  
For revels, dances, masks and merry hours  
Forerun fair Love, strewing her way with flowers.  
(IV.iii.352-56)

The pastime devised by the men to entertain the ladies is indeed “strange”, as they will dress themselves as strangers, “like Moscovites or Russians” (V.ii.122). However, their masque will turn out a failure since each man will court the wrong lady and end up in perjury. This scene summarizes the abuses of languages recurrent in the play: the messages are misdelivered, once again, and love oaths are broken as the lords broke their promise to fast and study at the beginning of the play. Just like Armado, the Russians crystallize the anxieties about language that run throughout the play. Moreover, Rosaline’s comment echoes the Princess’s response to Armado evoked before and strengthens the parallel between the various foreigners in the comedy <sup>21</sup>:

ROSALINE. What would these strangers? know their minds, Boyet.  
If they do speak our language, 'tis our will  
That some plain man recount their purposes.  
Know what they would.  
(V.ii.174-77)

The emphasis on a possible communication problem — “*if they do speak our language*” (my emphasis) — knowing that the ladies are fully aware of who the “Russians” really are, is a key to explaining the gap between the different uses of language in the play. Men and women do not speak the same language, just as the pedants and the peasants display very distinct linguistic identities, and (so-called) foreigners are a way to embody and crystallize this anxiety which has, *in fine*, nothing to do with foreign tongues. The linguistic problem that dooms most of the dialogues in the play is not that the characters speak different languages, but that they fail to resort to “plain” words.

The embedded play within the play also serves as a metatheatrical comment on Armado: the lords are playing foreigners just as the actor playing Armado is merely *acting* like a Spaniard. Through the

masquerade, the King and his men seem to literalise the fact that they are themselves Armadoes: they are Russians instead of Spaniards, but they are acting out stereotypes all the same.

Shakespeare relies on the well-known ethnotype of the Spaniard while also referring to an actual Spanish courtier in order to point out a defective use of language common to all the characters in the play. Knowing that his audience would be alert to anything Spanish, especially if named after the Great Armada, the playwright seems to use the attention Armado will inevitably draw to highlight a human feature all characters share (i.e. the difficulty to communicate and to apprehend the true function of language) , handing to everyone, both on stage and out stage, a magnifying mirror.

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## NOTES

1. All references to *Love's Labour's Lost* are drawn from *The Complete Works* , eds. John Jowett, William Montgomery, Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Oxford, OUP, 2005.
2. *The Complete Works* , *op . cit .* , p. 308. Barnardine, the “dissolute condemned prisoner” of *Measure for Measure* is attributed heavy and limiting characteristics as well. However, the features he is ascribed are arguably less subjective than those of Armado, especially as far as the adjective “condemned” is concerned.
3. Critical studies do exist, though. See for instance Daniel Buchner , “Don Armado and the Commedia dell’Arte,” *Studies in Philology* , 37, 1940, p. 201-24; “Don Armado as Gallant,” *Revue Anglo-Américaine* 13, 1935, p. 18-28. Francesco Cordasco, *Don Adriano de Armado of Love's Labour's Lost*, Bologne, Facolta di Lettere e Filosofia, La Universita, 1950. Lynne Magnusson. “‘To gaze so much at the fine stranger’: Armado and the Politics of English in *Love's Labour's Lost*” in *Shakespeare and the Culture of Performance* , eds. Paul Yachnin and Patricia Badir, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008, p. 53-68. Gustav Ungerer, *Anglo-Spanish Relations in Tudor Literature*, Madrid, Madrid: Schweitzer, 1956.

4. There is no list of dramatic personae in either the 1598 Quarto or the 1623 Folio and the description of Armado varies with each edition. However, he is always described through an epithet which underlines his eccentricity or braggartism.
5. This contemporary reference is very convincingly elucidated by Gustav Ungerer in the third chapter of his book *Anglo-Spanish relations in Tudor literature*, *op. cit.*
6. For an extensive account of Pérez's life, see Gregorio Marañón, *Antonio Pérez: El Hombre, El Drama, La Época*, Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe Argentina, 1948.
7. Julia Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *Antonio Pérez*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1922, p.1. "There is no place on earth where the tale of my persecutions and adventures remain unknown" (my translation)
8. The London edition of Pérez' famous book, the *Relaciones*, as well as a later treatise were both published under this name.
9. The *Relaciones* were first published in Spanish by Richard Field. They created a great sensation at the Elizabeth's court and a copy was presented to Sidney. It was translated into English in 1591. A Latin translation was penned by John de Cárdenas. It was never published however as, according to Ungerer, "by this time the Pilgrim's star was already dwindling away in England", *op. cit.*, p. 94-95.
10. *The Works of Thomas Middleton*, Ed. A. H. Bulen, New York: AMS Press, 1964.
11. The same quotation illustrates the reference both to Pérez and to Spain (see above) which shows how intricate the various levels of referentiality are and how easily the play moves from one to another.
12. Both forms, Armado and Armada, are indeed found in contemporary documents.
13. See the pioneering work of William Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: The Development of Anti-Spanish Sentiment, 1558-1660*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1971.
14. William Maltby, *The Black Legend*, *op. cit.*, p. 77. Historians have been arguing over the reason explaining the English victory but I am dealing here not with the correct historical set of reasons, but with the actual English perception of this victory.
15. G B. *A Fig for the Spaniard*, London, John Wolfe, 1591, C2.
16. *Ibid.*, C3.
17. The same process can be observed when Armado chooses to play Hector in the masque at the end of the play. His pompous announcement is immediately debunked by the lords, just as the rest of his bombastic interventions are generally undercut throughout the play. The exchange accentuates the characteristics of Armado's inflated sense of self – he is playing Hector, nothing less – and the ridicule he is exposed to because of it.
18. During the conference, Sophie Lemercier-Goddard pointed out that, at the end of the play, the audience is told that Armado will "hold the plough for her [Jaquenetta's] sweet love three years" (V.ii.870). We are thus eventually presented with an image of the perfect Englishman.

19. The adjective “thrasonical” comes from the braggart soldier in Terence’s *Eunuchus*. It evokes the well-known dramatic type of the *miles gloriosus* inspired by Plautus.

20. In this respect, it would probably prove fruitful to suggest a comparison between Barnardine in *Measure for Measure* and Armado. The hyper definition of both characters (see footnote 2) indeed takes on a broader significance as far as the play is concerned: in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Armado embodies the reflexion on language all the characters contribute to, while in *Measure for Measure*, Barnardine crystallizes what is at stake in the play in terms of vice and justice’s response to it.

21. Armado is also compared to the Monarcho, a delusional Italian living at the court of England and entertaining the Elizabethans with his fantasies as he pretended to be a powerful emperor (4.1.92). This topical allusion seems to link Armado with the Mediterranean world in general, and not just with Spain. I would argue however that it contributes to reinforcing the characterization of Armado as alien without affecting his inherent Spanishness. Indeed, Italy and Spain shared in the eyes of the Elizabethan not only a political and religious connection, but also a set of common features in keeping with the theory of humours and climates which corresponds precisely to the stereotype Armado acts out: braggartism, quick temper.

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## ABSTRACTS

In this paper, I consider the Spanish character staged in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Don Adriano de Armado, to study the very specific way Shakespeare uses ethnotypes. To do so, I will first recall a possible reference for Armado : Antonio Pérez was a contemporary at the court of England and Shakespeare uses this topical reference to fashion his own ethnotype representing not just a Spaniard, but Spaniards in general. Shakespeare then relies on this ethnotype to stage Spain itself through a synecdochic shift and to present his contemporaries with a cathartic representation of England’s most feared enemy. I will then argue that Shakespeare creates an ethnotype only the better to deconstruct its alienness by showing that everyone, both on stage and out stage, is his or her own version of Don Armado.

Cet article se propose d’étudier le personnage de l’Espagnol mis en scène dans *Peines d’amour perdues*, Don Adriano de Armado, afin d’analyser la manière très spécifique dont Shakespeare utilise les ethnotypes. Pour ce faire, je commencerai par élucider une possible



référence à un contemporain : Antonio Pérez était un Espagnol présent à la cour d'Angleterre, et le dramaturge semble utiliser cette référence pour construire un ethnotype lui permettant de caricaturer non un Espagnol en particulier, mais l'Espagnol en général. Grâce à la création d'une caricature de l'Espagnol, il met ensuite en scène, par un procédé synecdotique illustré dans le nom d'Armado, une représentation de l'Espagne elle-même. Cette mise en scène se fait sur un mode cathartique pour ses contemporains particulièrement marqués par le conflit anglo-espagnol. Je m'attacherai ensuite à démontrer que, si Shakespeare construit un ethnotype renvoyant à l'Espagne, c'est pour mieux le déconstruire au fil de la pièce en remettant en question son étrangeté : sur la scène de *Peines d'Amour Perdues*, chaque personnage est un Armado en puissance.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** Peines d'amour perdues, Pérez Antonio, Espagne, Armada, stéréotype, ethnotype, représentation, étranger **Keywords:** Love's Labour's Lost, Pérez Antonio, Spain, stereotype, ethnotype, representation, alien

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# Muscovites and “Black-amours”: Alien Love Traders in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*

Ladan Niayesh

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Along with *The Tempest*, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* is in its own peculiar way the Shakespearean play that comes closest to recalling the classical unities of time and place, which — let us not forget — were far from being the norm on the early modern English stage. The entire action appears to take place in an indeterminate, outdoor yet enclosed, space vaguely corresponding to Navarre’s court and its surrounding park. The duration of the action is equally unspecified, but it probably takes no longer than the few hours or the day needed for “the packet” from France (II.i.161)<sup>1</sup> to arrive and settle the dispute over Aquitaine. In view of this, it appears as paradoxical for this play as for the island play of *The Tempest* to see it include so many references to the world at large and such an acute awareness of the international conflicts, commercial networks and early colonial endeavours which characterised that period of early globalisation. Such references include, not just the historical figures of Henri IV of France and Navarre and his courtiers, or the Spanish Armada reflected in the braggart Spaniard’s name, but also mentions of sun-worshipping Indians from either the East or the West Indies

(iv.iii.213), Blackamoor musicians (v.ii.157 sd) and Muscovites in the masque scene (v.ii.158-264), as well as a large number of *exotica* in the young men's courtly expressions of love. One such example is the "Ethiop" to whom Dumaine compares the goddess Juno considered inferior to Katherine in beauty ("Thou for whom Jove would swear / Juno but an Ethiop were", iv.iii.109-110), or the precious "ebony" imported from the Indian subcontinent and Africa which is associated to Rosaline in the same scene ("Is ebony like her? O word divine!", iv.iii.239). But why should we have this paradoxical experience of a simultaneous closing and opening of the world at the heart of the play's action and preoccupations? And what exactly do those alien figures and *exotica* contribute to the play's love symbolism and the overall reflexion on the boundaries of the self and the other which is entailed by it? Such are the questions that this paper wishes to address.

It is worth noticing that right from the start, there is a contradiction between Navarre's project of "a little academe" (I.i.13) and the scope of the ambition which goes with it, purporting to triumph both in space and time. The king's calling his companions "brave conquerors" setting out to overcome "the huge army of the world's desires" (I.i.8 and 10) conjures up to some extent the image of European *conquistadores* sailing out to submit vast regions and peoples in the New World to earn material riches and eternal fame. But just as the sudden enlarging of the *conquistadores'* world was also accompanied by fears of losing one's life or worse, one's soul, 'going native' in a hostile environment or at the savages' contact, Navarre's articles reveal a deep anxiety at the heart of his metaphorical project of self-conquest. A clean diet, religious discipline and above all chastity are thus immediately imposed by the leader as ways of

ensuring that his troops remain steadfast and unpolluted in their identities and moral resolves.

In these circumstances, the contact zones established in several characters' names and backgrounds function as a sort of Freudian "return of the repressed", dooming Navarre's protectionist approach to identity and integrity right from the start. Berowne's name, for example, sounds rather close to "Brown", as if it had already gone half-way to meet his dark lady whose name, Rosaline (starting in "rose"), sounds like a mockery of her own skin colour. As for the King's other companion and unofficial jester, Armado, his early presentation as "A knight / From tawny Spain" (I.i.170-171) beset by "the black oppressing humour" (I.i.222) recalls not just the caricature of a melancholy lover, but also the prospect of mixed blood, given the Morisco and Jewish backgrounds of Catholic Spain. Though repressed generally, such dark reminders do emerge in the text from time to time, as when Costard, receiving Armado's "remuneration", praises him as "my incony Jew!" (III.i.118), or later when he gets his name wrong, calling him "Dun Adramadio" (IV.iii.190) – "dun" being defined in the *OED* as "a dull or dingy brown" or "a dull greyish brown", suggesting once more the prospect of an ethnic blend. Already standing as it does on a threshold between two countries, France and Spain, Navarre thus also becomes a linguistic laboratory for mixtures of colours, as a possible, subliminal prelude to a mixture of bloods. The choice of "Blackamoor" musicians to introduce the masque of the Muscovites in V.ii, playing on a bilingual pun (English "black" and French "amour"), further yokes together the temptation of love and the fear of miscegenation. Wavering between the two options, the quasi-'Brown' character of Berowne praises and defends his dark lady's skin colour in IV.iii, but cannot help being in denial in his

contacts with her, obsessively wanting her “white” against all odds, as when he addresses his letter “To the snow-white hand of the most beauteous Lady Rosaline” (iv.ii.117-118) or when he recalls her as “A whitely wanton with a velvet brow” (iii.i.173) even in monologue, alone with his own judgement.

H. R. Woudhuysen comments in his introduction to the Arden edition of the play on the “introverted and self-referential” world of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, in which over a third of lines rhyme and where “characters regularly pick up others’ rhymes and often complete them”,<sup>2</sup> as if the play’s poetry was following the design of Navarre’s “curious-knotted garden” (i.i.233), constantly folding back on itself. Although I fully agree with this, I also feel the play offers a creative tension between clinging to closed systems and the urge to open them up. For all its knotted design, even Navarre’s enclosed garden is not immune to the wide-ranging temptation of new cartography, applied to it by the travelling Spanish knight as he locates the exact site of the act of flesh in it: “It standeth north-north-east and by east from the west corner of thy curious-knotted garden” (i.i.232-233). Reducing the domain of application of cartography does not eliminate the directions of the compass, but just crams them together. Likewise, further in the play, the small measures or steps in a dance requested by the fake Muscovites get telescoped with travellers’ miles which the Ladies invite them to measure (v.ii.184-194). This linguistic metamorphosis shows once more how powerless the enclosed, courtly world of Navarre is in its attempts to artificially keep out the world at large waiting at its door as the Princess of France and her train do. For all the protectionist provisions in Navarre’s decree, his fictional world keeps expanding just as the real world of Shakespeare and his contemporaries did in that age of Great Travels. And if neither protectionism nor denial

prove efficient in dealing with that ever-widening world, other strategies have to be worked out.

Chief among those strategies is trade, both within the fictional world of Navarre and the historical one of the early modern period. In the real world, the end of the sixteenth century witnessed the birth of the major English companies engaged in trade with faraway lands, such as the Levant Company (founded in 1581), the Barbary Company (1585) and the East India Company (1600). The oldest of those companies was the Muscovy Company, chartered in 1555 and engaged in trade with the Russia of Ivan the Terrible (reg. 1533-1584). The company chiefly exported English woollens of diverse qualities, from the cheap and coarse russets and kerseys mentioned in *Love's Labour's Lost* in Berowne's modest "russet yeas and honest kersey noes" (v.ii.413), to the luxury scarlets and purples possibly recalled in the name "Prince of Purpoole", the fictional ruler of the Grey's Inn's revels *Gesta Greyorum* (1594), one of the alleged sources for the Muscovy material in Shakespeare's play. Historically, trade negotiations with Russia were complicated over several decades by Ivan the Terrible's repeated demands for an English wife as part of the bargain in granting trading privileges to the English Merchants. Ivan first asked for the hand of Elizabeth I herself and then for that of her lady-in-waiting, Mary Hastings, sending to England several embassies to that effect between 1567 and 1583. The "Russian romance", as Daryl Palmer mockingly calls it,<sup>3</sup> only ended with the Tsar's death which, we may surmise, came to the besieged ladies as much as a relief as the departure of the "frozen Muscovites" (v.ii.265) in Shakespeare's play.

The superimposition of commercial trade and love trade in Elizabethan England's relations with Muscovy, as they are remembered in the masque of the Muscovites in *Love's Labour's Lost*,

warns us as to how much the courtly, idealising discourse of love in the play is shot through by a far less dignified discourse of traffic with the Other and possession of that Other. “Price you yourselves. What buys your company?”, Navarre anxiously asks the ladies from under his Muscovite’s disguise (v.ii.224), while he and his courtiers have already sent in rich love tokens to the ladies in a bid to “buy” themselves brides. Their gifts include the miniature of a lady framed in diamonds for the Princess (v.ii.3), gloves for Katherine (v.ii.49), pearls for Maria (v.ii.53) and an unspecified favour for Rosaline. The framed lady of the miniature, itself a *mise-en-abyme* of the commodification of women in the process of wooing them with gifts, announces what William C. Carroll calls “the miscognition of the women as property”<sup>4</sup> as the nobles court their own precious tokens while mistaking the ladies’ actual identities.

The gross caricature of the Muscovites’ wooing actually makes explicit a misconception that has been there throughout in Navarre and his courtiers’ approach to their partners. Commenting on the precious nature of “fairness” in Petrarchan poetry, Kim Hall notes the pun which connects fairness in the double sense of beauty and whiteness with the commodification of women in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*: “Of all complexions the culled sovereignty / Do meet as at a fair in her fair cheek”, says Berowne in his praise of Rosaline’s skin colour (iv.iii.225-226).<sup>5</sup> Here, Rosaline’s face becomes a “fair” in the sense of a market — and a slave market to boot — where one can “cull” or select the fairest complexion among those from all over the world which are on offer.

Throughout the play, as John Archer notes, “chattel slavery is subsumed in the language of courtship, in the desire to possess women on the one hand and the offer to serve them on the other.”<sup>6</sup> The praising/pricing of women is systematic on the part of their

suitors who at times sound more like bidders at an auction, as in the above-quoted “Price you yourselves. What buys your company?” or in the opening words of the Muscovites’ episode advertising the ladies as the expensive cloth of which their visors are made, “rich taffeta”, made “richer” and “richest” before being packed into a “parcel” in preparation for the bidders’ arrival:

MOTH. All hail, the **richest** beauties on the earth!

BOYET. Beauties no **richer** than **rich** taffeta.

MOTH. A holy **parcel** of the fairest dames

That ever turned their — backs — to mortal views. (v.ii.158-162; my emphasis)

The specter of slavery looms large behind the love poetry of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. Archer sees it “concealed in the court of Navarre’s fascination with blackness, beauty, and the gentler servitude of erotic courtship.”<sup>7</sup> “Dumaine was at my service”, jokes Maria after the Muscovites’ departure (v.ii.276); “And Longaville was for my service born”, adds Katherine (284). The etymological connection between “Slav” and “Slave”, the long-standing Tatar yoke on Russia, as well as Ivan the Terrible’s own absolutist regime had long associated Russia and slavery in the minds of Shakespeare’s contemporaries, an association which was also repeatedly recalled in former ambassador Giles Fletcher’s *Of the Russe Common Wealth* (1591), the chief authority on Russian matters at the time.<sup>8</sup> Slippery etymology may have added a touch of black colour to this general picture, with the Nogai Horde (a confederation of Tatar tribes submitted by Ivan’s troops) referred to in Elizabethan texts as “Nagar” Tatars (e.g. in the plot of the lost play of *Tamar Cam* in Edward Alleyn’s papers)<sup>9</sup> and then gradually as “Negro Tartars”, as they appear in *Gesta Greyorum*, the above-mentioned Inns of Court entertainment which helps contextualise the Muscovite material of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.



Thus belonging both to the Old World of Russia and the New World of sun-worshippers in Berowne's "Who sees the heavenly Rosaline..." speech (iv.iii.212-218), the "Blackamoors" and "savage m[e]n of Ind" offer us the picture of a globalised world governed by the economy of trade in luxury goods and slaves, a world in which East meets West, not just in the word "Ind" applied both to the East and West Indies, but in the same mechanisms of appropriation ruling everywhere. The "rude and savage man of Ind" who in Berowne's speech "bows ... his vassal head" "at the first opening of the gorgeous east" (iv.iii.213-215) is no different from his nearly "brown" equivalent Berowne asking the ladies under his Muscovite's disguise to "Vouchsafe to show the sunshine of your face, / That we, like savages, may worship it" (v.ii.201-202). John Gillies, in his classical study on *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference*, argued that the exotic "is an action rather than a phenomenon, a kind of relation rather than a kind of character."<sup>10</sup> This appears to be the chief function of the references to aliens and alienness in the context of the courtly wooing in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Recalling such sinister specters as those of the triangular trade which had already started in the Atlantic and the enslavement of human beings that was inseparable from commercial, privateering and settlement enterprises throughout the world, the aliens of *Love's Labour's Lost* point to whatever goes so very wrong in such unbalanced, un'fair' bargains. Resting on such shaky foundations, the love traders of Shakespeare's play may well travel metaphorically to the world's ends, either by way of the East of Muscovy or the West of sun-worshipping New World Indians, but they still fail in reaching "a world-without-end bargain" (v.ii.763) with their partners, one which would be equal enough to be accepted by both parties and remain valid through time.

As the ladies make clear in their exchanges with their suitors in the masque scene, they “cannot be bought” in the Muscovite fashion: “Then cannot we be bought”, says Rosaline disguised as the Princess (v.ii.226). There is no denying the transactional pattern which rules, not just the proto-globalised early modern world, but human interaction altogether and the plot of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* from beginning to end, that is from the “dowry for a queen” which Aquitaine is (ii.i.8) to the show of the “Nine Worthies” which foregrounds “worth” and valuation even in the trade of honour. Yet what the French Princess and her ladies offer at the end is a sounder, more balanced form of trade and exchange, one in which neither of the parties is to try to cheat the other, commodify the other, or “frame” the other as in the lady’s portrait earlier offered by Navarre. Accounts will be kept and compared in the “reckoning” promised at the year’s end (“the annual reckoning”, v.ii.772). Such reckoning is a necessity before any deal can be struck in a definitive manner.

Ultimately, despite Navarre’s original project of an enclosed and overcontrolled world, one in which the Other – Muscovite, Indian or Woman – is either not admitted or commodified and denied humanity and equality, what triumphs in the play is infinite – or at least unfinished – expansion and lack of closure. “You that way, we this way” is the last line of the play (v.ii.896). It certainly implies separation, but it also suggests in its very structure the balance that was so cruelly missing in the love exchanges throughout. For better or worse, the line also points to new directions which still need to be explored and new trades which need to be sought before Navarre’s world can reach a final – and finally satisfactory – form.

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# NOTES

1. All quotes from the play refer to the New Cambridge edition of *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. William C. Carroll, Cambridge, CUP, 2009.
  2. William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen, London, Thomson Learning, 1998, p. 49.
  3. Daryl W. Palmer, *Writing Russia in the Age of Shakespeare*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004, p. 72.
  4. Carroll, "Introduction", *op. cit.*, p. 5.
  5. Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1995, p. 90.
  6. John Michael Archer, *Old Worlds: Egypt, Southwest Asia, India, and Russia in Early Modern English Writing*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2001, p. 129.
  7. *Ibid.*, p. 124-125.
  8. For more details on this, see Richard Hellie, *Slavery in Russia, 1450-1725*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982.
  9. The plot is reproduced on the "Lost Plays Database": [http://www.lostplays.org/index.php/Tamar\\_Cham,\\_Parts\\_1\\_and\\_2](http://www.lostplays.org/index.php/Tamar_Cham,_Parts_1_and_2) (accessed on February 13, 2015).
  10. John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference*, Cambridge, CUP, 1994, p. 99.
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# ABSTRACTS

Noting the contradiction between the self-enclosed world of Navarre's "little academe" and the play's constant reminders of a proto-globalized, ethnically and racially mixed world around it, this article reflects on what alien figures and exotica contribute to the love symbolism of *Love's Labour's Lost* and the play's overall reflection on identity and difference. Present everywhere like a return of the repressed, obsessions with and anxieties about the commodification of love weave a transactional pattern into the play, forcing the lovers to seek the terms for a "fair" trade by drawing lessons from the counter-example of the masque of the Muscovites.

Partant de la contradiction entre la volonté d'enfermement qui caractérise la « petite académie » de Navarre et les rappels constants du monde proto-globalisé, ethniquement et racialement mêlé qui l'environne, cet article se concentre sur ce que les références

étrangères et exotiques apportent au symbolisme amoureux de *Peines d'amour perdues* et à sa réflexion générale sur l'identité et la différence. Partout présentes tel un retour du refoulé, l'obsession et l'angoisse de la marchandisation de l'amour tissent un réseau dense de métaphores commerciales dans la pièce, forçant les amants à chercher des modalités équitables au « commerce de l'amour », en tirant les leçons du contre-exemple du masque des Moscovites.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** Muscovite, black, Tartar, slave trade, Love's Labour's Lost, Petrarchism, identity, Gesta Greyorum **Mots-clés:** Moscovite, Russie, Tatar, commerce d'esclaves, noir, étranger, Peines d'amour perdues, identité, Gesta Greyorum

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# Traduire le nom des personnages de *Love's Labour's Lost* : ethnocentrisme et exotisme dans une pièce cosmopolite

Laetitia Sansonetti

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## Entre le même et l'autre, penser l'identité

### La traduction comme répétition

ROSALINE. What would these strangers? Know their minds, Boyet.  
If they do speak our language, 'tis our will  
That some plain man recount their purposes.  
Know what they would?  
BOYET. What would you with the princess?  
BEROWNE. Nothing but peace and gentle visitation.  
ROSALINE. What would they, say they?  
BOYET. Nothing but peace and gentle visitation.  
ROSALINE. Why, that they have, and bid them so be gone.  
BOYET. She says, you have it and you may be gone <sup>1</sup>.

Lors de leur piteuse « ambassade », les hommes de Navarre déguisés en Moscovites sont accueillis par un intermédiaire, Boyet, qui sert de traducteur entre ces pseudo-inconnus et les dames de France, bien décidées à saboter le divertissement. Mais le processus de

traduction, c'est-à-dire de transmission d'information par le transfert d'une langue à l'autre, s'apparente bien plutôt à la répétition comique qu'à un moyen de communication. Bien que rien dans la graphie ne le laisse supposer, il est possible d'imaginer que les Navarrais aient adopté un accent pour déguiser leur voix comme ils ont masqué leur identité d'un costume exotique. Mais il est tout aussi possible de se délecter de la répétition quasi à l'identique, le passage du discours direct au discours indirect permettant de souligner les enjeux de pouvoir et de représentation, c'est-à-dire à la fois d'image projetée et de délégation.

Un peu plus loin dans la scène du Masque, le jeu de mots de Katharine sur la seconde moitié du nom de Longaville pourrait se comprendre comme une allusion à l'accent « étranger » qu'il chercherait à adopter : « 'Veal', quoth the Dutchman. Is not veal a calf? » (v.ii.247). En tout cas, ce « *veal* » renvoie à l'altérité supposée de ce soupirant qui, se croyant anonyme, courtise la mauvaise personne, en jouant non seulement sur la langue, mais aussi sur les langues, puisque la plaisanterie ne se comprend qu'en imaginant à la fois une prononciation défectueuse de « *well* » et l'origine française du terme qui désigne la viande de veau. Le décalage introduit par la prononciation crée également un décalage au sein même de l'anglais, puisque la corruption phonétique de « *well* » à « *veal* » passe par « *veil* », mot qui renvoie au déguisement des deux personnages concernés <sup>2</sup>.

Les deux scènes de traduction orale quasi simultanée que je viens de mentionner montrent que le processus de traduction se rapporte à des enjeux thématiques et dramatiques essentiels pour la pièce, à savoir l'expression (physique et linguistique) de l'identité et la difficulté d'une communication efficace (sans oublier les délices comiques que génèrent les échecs de communication <sup>3</sup>).

Ma réflexion sur la traduction des noms propres abordera donc la dimension inter-linguistique du questionnement sur l'identité sous deux aspects qui se font écho : au sein de la pièce, la forme paradoxale de cosmopolitisme qui se dégage de la mise en présence de personnages d'origines disparates ; dans les traductions en français de la pièce depuis *Le Tourneur* au dix-huitième siècle jusqu'à la version la plus récente de Jean-Michel Déprats, la tension entre deux voies possibles pour la traduction, l'ethnocentrisme et l'exotisme.

## Ethnocentrisme et exotisme

Le terme d'« ethnocentrisme » apparaît pour la première fois dans les travaux du sociologue américain William Graham Sumner en 1906 : « Ethnocentrism is the technical name for this view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it <sup>4</sup>. » L'attitude qu'il désigne se retrouve dans tous les groupes humains depuis l'origine de l'humanité, ainsi qu'en témoigne la liste des exemples fournis par Sumner ; l'un des plus connus, et des plus intéressants du point de vue linguistique, est celui des Grecs, qui appelaient « barbares » les étrangers, mimant par la désignation onomatopéique (« *bárbaros* ») la différence linguistique qui motivait l'exclusion.

Quant à l'exotisme, il part lui aussi de la perception de la différence comme altérité, faisant de l'autre un objet de curiosité à cause de sa distance (géographique, culturelle, symbolique <sup>5</sup>). Or, c'est justement à la Renaissance que les contacts entre différents systèmes culturels éloignés géographiquement se développent et se renforcent à la faveur des voyages vers des contrées inconnues jusqu'alors, d'où les voyageurs ramènent des images et des récits qui

vont susciter la fascination et mettre en branle l'imagination. Et c'est à la fin du seizième siècle qu'apparaît le terme en anglais <sup>6</sup>.

En traduction, Henri Meschonnic appelle « ethnocentrisme » une « tradition » qu'il dénonce parce qu'elle « ramène l'autre au même » en accomplissant « l'effacement de l'altérité <sup>7</sup> », c'est-à-dire qu'elle vise à donner l'impression, l'illusion que le texte dit « source » a été écrit dans la langue dite « cible ». Meschonnic prône plutôt une conception de la traduction qui soit « une transformation de l'identité par la diversité <sup>8</sup>. » Dans le même ordre d'idées, Antoine Berman affirme que « l'essence de la traduction est d'être ouverture, dialogue, métissage, décentrement <sup>9</sup> » et souhaite en finir avec la traduction « ethnocentrique <sup>10</sup> ». Réduire l'Autre au Même en l'assimilant (s'il le faut par la force) ou l'exclure (par la ségrégation) ; utiliser l'altérité pour penser l'identité. Ces deux attitudes ne se laissent jamais aussi clairement percevoir que dans l'utilisation de la langue.

## Une pièce cosmopolite ?

### *Nomen est numen*

L'article de Ladan Niayesh dans le présent recueil analyse en détail les fonctions de l'étranger et des étrangers dans la pièce. Je lui emprunterai mon premier exemple, celui du nom de Berowne. L'orthographe n'est pas sans évoquer la couleur brune, ce qui l'inscrit dans le réseau de l'altérité sombre auquel sont également associés la brune Rosaline (malgré son nom) et l'Espagnol Don Adriano de Armado, originaire d'un pays associé à la couleur bistre (« tawny Spain » [I.i.171]). Dans un article sur les mots étrangers dans le théâtre de Shakespeare, Mylène Lacroix attire l'attention sur le titre même de Don Armado, « que Costard s'empresse de



corrompre en Dun Adramadio [iv.iii.190], se moquant ainsi, à son insu, du teint basané de l'Espagnol <sup>11</sup> », puisque l'adjectif « dun » renvoie à la couleur brune. *Nomen est numen* donc, le nom dit l'essence, mais par le truchement d'un jeu sur les sonorités qui nécessite une conversion trans-linguistique.

La confusion phonétique de Costard va plus loin, puisqu'elle renforce l'association au monde guerrier en ajoutant à la référence espagnole à l'homme armé (*armado*), ou à l'*Armada* de Philippe II, l'écho du tambour martial (*drum*). On pourrait aussi y entendre l'expression sonore de son association à Moth à travers *dram*, la drachme, mesure équivalant à un seizième d'once et renvoyant donc à une quantité négligeable. Mais on y entend surtout une succession de consonnes précipitées ; il est bien difficile de jeter la pierre à ce pauvre Costard, car prononcer -DRN- suivi de -RMD- est un défi digne de Démosthène, l'orateur grec qui avait surmonté son bégaiement en s'entraînant à déclamer la bouche pleine de galets. Dull, lui, n'arrive même pas à prononcer le nom du *Signeour* (I.i.184 <sup>12</sup>).

Si la faconde maniérée d'Armado l'expose aux moqueries, son langage, qui repose sur l'utilisation de certains archaïsmes poétiques saxons (comme « yclept » [I.i.228]) et la création d'adjectifs composés, n'évoque pas vraiment l'Espagne. Quand il utilise une expression espagnole (qui pourrait tout aussi bien être italienne), non seulement c'est un cliché emprunté à Sénèque, mais il la met à distance en employant la troisième personne du pluriel : « we will put it, as they say, to *fortuna de la guerra* » (v.ii.524 <sup>13</sup>). Ainsi que le souligne Lynn Magnusson,

However much [Armado's] name may seem reminiscent of an event associated with hatred of the Spanish, there is nothing of the threatening or despised alien, even if he is a figure of fun [...]. [H]e comes to be cast as an aspiring immigrant, eager to assimilate <sup>14</sup>.

Le vocabulaire de l'acculturation (« immigrant », « assimilate ») signale la transition d'une utilisation « exotique » du personnage à un point de vue « ethnocentrique ». Cet Espagnol qui linguistiquement n'a que peu d'Espagne en lui si ce n'est son nom et l'insistance des autres personnages à mentionner son pays d'origine, faut-il néanmoins l'imaginer parlant avec un accent espagnol ? Je reviendrai sur cette question dans ma dernière section.

Retournons à Berowne, personnage qui pourrait évoquer Armand de Gontaut, baron de Biron, ou son fils Charles, duc de Biron, tous deux liés à Henri IV le Navarrais. Tout comme ses comparses Longaville et Dumaine, Berowne porte un nom à consonance française orthographié à l'anglaise<sup>15</sup>. La transcription sert donc ici à assurer une prononciation à peu près conforme à la prononciation française, ce qui rend ces personnages à la fois plus « anglais » dans la graphie et plus « français » dans les sonorités.

Les noms des compagnes de la princesse française, qui ne sont que des prénoms, sont quant à eux repérés par la critique au sein du canon shakespearien : Katherine a presque le même nom que Katharina, l'héroïne « italienne » de *The Taming of the Shrew*, mais rappelle aussi la princesse Katherine de France courtisée par Henry dans *Henry V* ; Maria possède une homonyme dans *Twelfth Night* ; Rosaline fait penser au premier amour de Roméo dans *Romeo and Juliet* et à la Rosalind d'*As You Like It*. Les variations de graphie entre ces différentes pièces suffisent à rappeler que le mélange des nationalités et des langues est une caractéristique de l'onomastique shakespearienne.

Quant aux personnages secondaires possédant un nom anglais, ils se singularisent par le fait que leur nom anglais renvoie à un nom ou un adjectif qui reflète leur essence. Ici, pas de référence à une identité géographique mais une utilisation métaphorique du nom, dont le

sens doit être compris immédiatement en anglais : Moth est petit et jeune, Costard a une grosse tête, Dull n'est pas très vif d'esprit.

## Traduction et identité

Moth n'est toutefois pas « purement » anglais, puisque son nom invite lui aussi au jeu de mots interlinguistique. Rapprochant « moth » du français « mot », rapprochement adéquat si l'on pense à la vivacité langagière du petit page, W.C. Carroll définit ainsi la pièce : « a 'French' play for a courtly (French-speaking?) audience <sup>16</sup> . » La corrélation entre la dimension sociale et la dimension cosmopolite, ou du moins la capacité à évoluer dans un milieu bilingue anglais-français, comme l'a été pendant très longtemps la Cour anglaise, voire plurilingue, comme elle l'était sans doute à l'époque d'Élisabeth, me semble très intéressante.

Le jeu de mots de Katherine précédemment cité mobilise le français, l'anglais et le néerlandais en lien avec la réflexion sur l'identité et l'altérité géographique ; d'autres jeux de mots mettent en lumière le rôle joué par la traduction dans l'établissement d'une hiérarchie sociale en rapport avec l'aliénation linguistique. Le terme « *brawl* », employé par Moth pour suggérer à Armado un moyen de conquérir sa bien-aimée, est mal compris par son interlocuteur, en vertu de l'homophonie entre le mot désignant la danse de cour lente, importé du français « branle », et le mot à l'origine incertaine désignant une rixe bruyante <sup>17</sup> :

MOTH. Master, will you win your love with a French brawl?

ARMADO. How meanest thou? Brawling in French?

MOTH. No, my complete master; but to jig off a tune at the tongue's end, canary to it with your feet, humour it with turning up your eyelids, sigh a note and sing a note, sometime through the throat, as if you swallowed love with singing love, sometime through the nose, as if you snuffed up love by smelling love; [...] (III.i.6-12)

Il me semble que l'antanaclase sur laquelle repose la confusion entre le branle et la querelle braillarde contient non seulement une dimension trans-artistique (danse, musique, peinture), mais aussi trans-culturelle et sociale. Pour Armado, « French brawl » ne peut être quelque chose de raffiné ; est-ce parce qu'en tant qu'étranger aux mœurs moins délicates et à la bourse moins pleine que son langage ne le laisse supposer (lui qui n'a pas de chemise), il n'est pas au fait des dernières danses à la mode à la Cour ? Ou bien Shakespeare utilise-t-il une figure d'étranger pour se moquer du pays qui est apparu pendant des siècles comme « l'Autre » de l'Angleterre, son ennemi intime, insinuant que les Français ne seraient bons qu'à se quereller bruyamment<sup>18</sup> ? Lorsqu'il chante, Moth le fait en reprenant un air français, « Quand Colinelle... », ou peut-être s'agit-il d'un air irlandais, « *Can cailin gheal* » (III.i.2) ? Poésie pastorale venue d'une terre autrefois anglaise ou chanson empruntée à un peuple qui refuse de se faire domestiquer par les colons anglais, les figures de l'altérité linguistique ne se laissent assimiler phonétiquement que pour mieux affirmer leur étrangeté<sup>19</sup>.

La dimension sociale du jeu de mots polyglotte est particulièrement manifeste dans les dialogues entre les pédants et les rustres. Pour savourer ces jeux de mots, il faut mesurer le décalage entre les locuteurs qui se targuent de dominer le latin et ceux dont la maîtrise de la langue anglaise est approximative. Patricia Parker en cite plusieurs, dont le latin « *haud credo* » de Holofernes : le terme n'est pas compris par Dull, qui se permet de corriger le pédant dans son identification erronée de l'animal tué lors de la partie de chasse (« it was a pricket » [IV.ii.18<sup>20</sup>]). Le même contraste est à l'œuvre entre l'impératif latin invitant Holofernes à poursuivre la démonstration de son talent de poète, « *Perge* » (IV.ii.48), et son homophone la «

purge » scatologique qu'évoquent des mots tels que « pollution » et « scurrility<sup>21</sup> » (iv.ii.42 et 49).

## Traduire le nom des personnages

Les traducteurs français de la pièce ont eu recours à des stratégies qui reflètent des rapports différents aux deux pôles de l'ethnocentrisme et de l'exotisme (ou défamiliarisation) définis précédemment. Je distinguerai trois groupes de personnages, les « Navarro-français », les « Anglais » et les « Italespagnols », dont j'étudierai les noms dans les traductions de Pierre Le Tourneur (1782), François-Victor Hugo (1860), Émile Montégut (1867), Pierre Messiaen (1939), Jean-Louis Supervielle (1955), Annie Berthet (1969), Jean Malaplate (2000) et Jean-Michel Déprats (1990, 2013)<sup>22</sup>.

### La scène est en Navarre

Puisque les hommes de Navarre tiennent leur nom de personnages historiques ayant appartenu au cercle proche ou lointain d'Henri IV, les traducteurs dans leur grande majorité leur donnent une orthographe française : *Berowne* devient « Biron<sup>23</sup> », *Longaville* est écrit « Longueville » et *Dumaine* est parfois scindé en deux. Seul Jean-Michel Déprats se démarque de ce consensus en choisissant de conserver « Berowne », graphie qui défamiliarise le gentilhomme navarrais (ou périgourdin, puisque telle était l'origine de la famille de Biron). Dans les notes à l'édition bilingue de la Pléiade, il justifie ainsi ce choix :

Le nom de Berowne est si attaché au rôle d'aristocrate persifleur de *Peines d'amour perdues*, et si peu en rapport avec l'ombrageux maréchal qu'évoquera Chapman [dans *La Conspiration et la Tragédie de Charles, duc de Biron*, que George Chapman orthographie *Byron*, en 1608], qu'il a été

conservé dans la présente traduction pour le distinguer de tout personnage historique contemporain <sup>24</sup>.

Pour Déprats, il s'agit de ne pas mettre sur la fausse piste d'une pièce « à clef » historique afin de ne pas parasiter la lecture.

Dans son approche des noms propres français, le traducteur français est ainsi confronté à un dilemme : s'il conserve la graphie d'origine, il transforme un effet d'assimilation (l'écriture phonétique « à l'anglaise » de noms étrangers) en défamiliarisation (difficile de reconnaître en *Berowne* un Navarrais – c'est bien la raison pour laquelle Déprats conserve « *Berowne* », dont le nom ne fait référence qu'au personnage créé par Shakespeare et n'a donc de sens qu'au sein de la pièce) ; s'il donne à tous les personnages un nom à consonance française, il risque de tomber dans l'acculturation forcée, l'assimilation indiscriminée.

Deux prénoms d'origine biblique méritent également notre attention. L'équivalent français de *Nathaniel*, « *Nathanaël* <sup>25</sup> », est choisi par Supervielle, Berthet et Malaplate, les autres préférant conserver la graphie anglaise. Le nom du pédant *Holofernes*, qui est orthographié avec un -f- dans les premières éditions, renvoie lui aussi à une figure biblique et s'écrit traditionnellement avec -ph-. L'équivalent français n'a pas de -s à la fin, ce qui ne semble pas poser de problème à la traduction. Pourtant, choisir « *Holopherne* » plutôt que « *Holof/phernes* », c'est renvoyer explicitement, dans son orthographe moderne, au personnage biblique décapité par Judith d'après le « Livre de Judith », texte deutérocanonique, et donc attirer l'attention sur l'origine extra-dramatique du pédant.

Messiaen propose une version française sans -s mais avec un -f- intervocalique, choix qui me semble refléter une volonté de ne pas assimiler ce qui relève d'un exotisme non plus géographique mais temporel. En effet, il est connu que le pédant de Shakespeare trouve

un ancêtre chez le précepteur de Gargantua, « un grand docteur en theologie nommé maistre Thubal Holoferne, qui luy aprint sa charte si bien qu'il la disoit par cueur au rebours<sup>26</sup>. » L'orthographe française n'étant pas plus fixée à l'époque de Rabelais (première moitié du seizième siècle) que ne l'était l'orthographe anglaise du temps de Shakespeare, surtout pour la translittération de mots d'origine hébraïque, le nom qui s'écrit de nos jours « Holoferne » pour souligner son origine « étrangère » (puisque -ph- et -f- se prononcent de la même manière) s'écrivait « Holoferne » il y a cinq cents ans. Choisir « Holoferne » plutôt que « Holopherne », c'est renvoyer à Rabelais explicitement, non seulement en tant que texte-source, mais en tant que texte du seizième siècle : c'est défamiliariser sur le mode temporel.

## Les jeux de mots en anglais

Les jeux de mots sur les noms anglais des personnages représentent un défi particulier pour les traducteurs, défi que seul Le Tourneur n'a pas relevé, laissant tels quels les noms de Dull, Costard et Moth<sup>27</sup>. On pourrait penser que c'est parce qu'il n'a pas compris qu'il y avait là des jeux de mots à transmettre aux lecteurs français. Mais l'appendice qui suit la pièce donne une autre explication, liée à l'évolution du goût : Le Tourneur, comme Samuel Johnson, détestait les jeux de mots, qu'il estimait indignes du génie en général et de celui de Shakespeare en particulier<sup>28</sup>. Il explique ainsi pourquoi il n'a pas traduit le poème sur le cerf tué à la chasse, qu'il inclut malgré tout mais dans une traduction « mot à mot » qu'il estime de toute façon inutile parce que pour comprendre ces jeux de mots ineptes, « il faut savoir l'Anglais » : « Et les équivoques de *sore*, plaie, avec *soare*, chevreuil de quatre ans, & *L*, lettre & chiffre romain valant cinquante. Tout cela ne vaut pas la peine d'être entendu<sup>29</sup>. » Parmi

les « Retranchements », c'est-à-dire les scènes retranchées du corps de la traduction et rejetées à la fin (mais pas complètement effacées, par souci d'honnêteté), figure justement la scène entre Costard, Moth et Armado où apparaît le jeu de mots assurant la mise en rapport du physique de Costard avec son nom : « Un prodige, mon maître ! Voici une grosse tête brisée au menton » ; la note de bas de page indique : « *a costard* : équivoque sur ce nom, qui signifie une pomme à grosse tête<sup>30</sup>. » Décidément peu sensible au comique décalé de la scène, Le Tourneur semble également avoir confondu « *chin* » et « *shin* » (III.i.59), gommant l'aberration physique du contact entre tête et tibia<sup>31</sup>.

Chez les autres traducteurs, « Balourd » l'emporte pour traduire *Dull* ; Berthet en propose une version assez proche, « Lourdaud », tandis que Montégut avait préféré « Lépais » ; Supervielle a une trouvaille qui me semble particulièrement réussie, un « Butor » digne d'Edmond Rostand qui est aussi un nom propre attesté (et c'est peut-être la raison pour laquelle les traducteurs suivants, œuvrant alors que l'homme de lettres français Michel Butor gagnait en célébrité, ne l'ont pas suivi dans cette voie). Quant à *Costard*, seuls deux traducteurs, Messiaen et Déprats, ont réussi à lui conserver sa double référence, à la tête et à un fruit, en le nommant respectivement « Potiron » et « Courge ». Pour Hugo, il est « Trogne<sup>32</sup> », que Berthet altère légèrement, transformant le nom en surnom avec « La Trogne », tandis que pour Montégut il est « Grossetête », pour Supervielle « Cabochard » et pour Malaplate « Caboche ». *Moth*, qui peut désigner au sens large un insecte et pas uniquement les mites ou les papillons de nuit (Montégut traduit « Papillon »), devient exotique (et socialement raffiné ?) dans la traduction technique de Hugo et Messiaen : « Phalène », emprunt savant du français au grec qui remonte au seizième siècle alors que



mot *moth* existait déjà en vieil anglais. Supervielle et Berthet choisissent eux aussi un terme plus récent que l'original anglais avec leur « Moustique », dont Malaplate propose une version plus répandue en France, le « Moucheron <sup>33</sup> ». Seul Déprats se démarque de l'insecte volant pour insister sur la vivacité du page, signalant que la graphie *moth* renvoyait également à la particule, au corpuscule (mot qui s'écrit de nos jours *mote*) : son « Puce », plus bref et vif dans ses sonorités, remplit particulièrement bien sa fonction.

Face aux nobles de Navarre, les personnages dont les noms anglais expriment une caractéristique physique ou intellectuelle appartiennent au domaine de l'indigène pour les spectateurs élisabéthains ; les traducteurs se sont donc employés à trouver des équivalents qui soient tout aussi immédiatement compréhensibles en français <sup>34</sup>, afin de ne pas faire passer ces personnages pour des curiosités exotiques aux yeux et surtout aux oreilles d'un lectorat francophone <sup>35</sup>.

## La dimension cosmopolite

S'il est un personnage que son nom identifie comme un étranger, c'est bien Don Adriano de Armado. Lorsque Boyet le décrit à la Princesse de France, Armado est assimilé par annomination (utilisation d'un nom propre comme nom commun) à un personnage bien connu des Élisabéthains, un certain « Monarcho » :

BOYET. This Armado is a Spaniard that keeps here in court,  
A phantasime, a Monarcho, and one that makes sport  
To the prince and his book-mates. (iv.i.91-93)

Ce Monarcho dont le nom était devenu synonyme de folie des grandeurs était un Italien fréquentant la cour d'Élisabeth dans les années 1570 et qui se prenait pour le roi du monde, d'où son surnom <sup>36</sup>. Dans l'assimilation d'Armado à Monarcho, il y a donc double

annomination, du nom commun italien (*monarca*) au surnom anglicisé (*Monarcho*) à l'emploi comme nom commun (*a Monarcho*). Thomas Churchyard lui consacre une épitaphe en 1580 :

Come poor old man, that bore the Monark's name,  
Thine Epitaph, shall here set forth thy fame.  
Thy climbing mind, aspired beyond the Stars,  
Thy lofty stile, no earthly title bore:  
[...]  
When strangers came, in presence anywhere,  
Strange was the talk, the Monark uttered then:  
He had a voice, could thunder through your ear,  
And speak much like, a merry Christmas man.  
[...]  
The man is dead, yet Monark liveth still <sup>37</sup> .

Or, si cet Italien était sans doute bien connu des contemporains de Shakespeare, il n'en va pas de même pour les lecteurs francophones. Puisque la référence originale n'est plus comprise, faut-il adapter ce nom ? La plupart des traducteurs fournissent une note explicative, mais tous ne tentent pas de le traduire, en vertu justement du référent historique. Ceux qui le traduisent, Supervielle et Déprats par « Matamore », Messiaen par « Artaban », ont recours à deux stratégies différentes de déplacement. « Artaban », choisi par Messiaen, est un nom d'origine perse et parthe porté par des princes et des soldats célèbres sur plusieurs siècles dans l'Antiquité ; il est connu par l'expression « fier comme Artaban », qui provient d'un roman en treize volumes du dix-septième siècle écrit par Gautier de La Calprenède, intitulé *Cléopâtre*. La dimension étrangère est certes perdue, malgré l'origine exotique du nom ; toutefois, si comme le disait Boileau à propos de La Calprenède, « Tout a l'humeur Gasconne, en un Auteur Gascon <sup>38</sup> », cet Armado-Artaban gascon ferait un double parfait pour Biron le Périgourdin.

Quant à Supervielle et Déprats, ils rendent à l'analogie d'Armado une origine méditerranéenne, revenant de l'Italie à l'Espagne. Même si l'équivalence ethnocentrique entre tous les peuples (catholiques) de la Méditerranée semble perdue, le lien entre Espagne et Italie demeure, puisque ce « tueur de Maures » est un personnage de la *commedia dell'arte*, c'est-à-dire la représentation italienne d'un personnage espagnol stéréotypé. Si la référence historique est perdue (et peut-il en être autrement ici ?), l'intertextualité théâtrale est mise en lumière. « Matamore », c'est donc à la fois un nom et une fonction, comme « Monarcho » était à la fois une fonction et un nom, mais le système d'annomination est interne au théâtre, ce qui relance la discussion sur le rapport entre nom et fonction.

## Le nom et la fonction

### La fonction plutôt que l'identité

Ce que le terme « Matamore » met en avant, c'est l'appartenance d'Armado à une catégorie de personnages stéréotypés héritée de la comédie latine. En effet, Armado est le descendant du *miles gloriosus* de Plaute<sup>39</sup>, du soldat fanfaron dont on trouve aussi une incarnation dans la lignée des « Capitaines » de la *commedia dell'arte* italienne, forme théâtrale qui a été rapprochée de *Love's Labour's Lost* par Daniel Boughner. Même si les deux figures ne sont pas parfaitement superposables, Armado possède plusieurs traits en commun avec le « Capitaine » de la comédie italienne, notamment sa disposition amoureuse, qui le pousse à se confier à son serviteur et le conduit à écrire des lettres enflammées qui n'atteignent pas leur destinataire, créant une confusion cocasse. C'est aussi un voyageur aux aspirations de noblesse qui se retrouve souvent à court d'argent. Mais Armado échappe aux bastonnades que reçoit régulièrement le

Capitaine, dont il ne partage pas la passion pour les jeux de dés ou de cartes ni la consommation de vin <sup>40</sup> .

Quant à son hispanité, il la tient aussi de la comédie italienne du seizième siècle, dans laquelle la haine de l'envahisseur colore le type du *Capitano* pour lui donner des traits espagnols, ainsi que l'explique Boughner : « To create a vehicle of derision, the Italians fused the satire of the Spaniard with the already flourishing role of the captain and set upon the stage the *capitano spagnuolo*, the supreme exaggeration of the type of the boastful soldier <sup>41</sup> . »

Ce type passe en France via des bateleurs italiens installés à Paris. Dans les fantaisies françaises de Tabarin, le Capitaine Rodomont (du nom du roi d'Alger imaginé par Boiardo dans *Roland amoureux* [1482] et repris par l'Arioste dans *Roland furieux* [1516-1532] et qui a donné « rodomontade ») parle un sabir de français, d'italien et d'espagnol :

Cavallierès, mousquetaderes, bombardas, canonés, morions, corseletes !  
Aqui, veillaco ! ... Son il Capitanio Rodomonté, la bravura, la valore de toto  
del mondo ; la mia spada s'est rendue triomphanté del toto universo. ... Que  
fasto en sta casa, Tabarin ! Que fasto, veillaco ? Io te quiero ablar. Aqui,  
veillacon ? Aqui, poerco ? Io te quiero matar, eres moerto <sup>42</sup> !

Or, on l'a vu, Armado soigne son anglais (jusqu'à l'excès). La comparaison entre la graphie de Tabarin et celle du texte shakespearien (dans laquelle un éventuel accent ne transparait pas, à la différence des parlers régionaux dans d'autres pièces <sup>43</sup> ) relance la question de l'identité sonore d'Armado <sup>44</sup> .

Christophe Camard rapproche une autre figure interlope du théâtre shakespearien, le Maure vénitien Othello, du soldat fanfaron appelé « Capitaine *Spavento* » [Épouvante] sur les scènes italiennes : « tout comme cette célèbre figure, Othello est un mercenaire qui raconte ses hauts faits, tombe facilement amoureux et se prétend prince de contrées lointaines <sup>45</sup> . » Ce rapprochement me semble d'autant plus

intéressant que ces deux soldats sont des figures d'altérité désireuses de s'intégrer, l'exotisme séduisant d'Othello se heurtant à l'ethnocentrisme de ses détracteurs qui l'accusent de n'être qu'un fanfaron. Le basculement de la comédie vers la tragédie survient quand le capitaine beau-parleur et jaloux finit par tuer son épouse innocente, alors qu'Armado ne peut pas se battre en duel pour défendre son honneur et son amour parce qu'il n'a pas chemise : « The naked truth of it is, I have no shirt » (v.ii.686).

L'absence de chemise, justement, le rapproche d'un avatar du soldat fanfaron un peu plus tardif (seconde moitié du dix-septième siècle), le « Capitaine Spezzafer » (« Taillefer »). D'après la pièce des *Trois voleurs découverts* (*Tre ladri scoperti*), ce dernier ne portait pas de chemise, ainsi qu'il l'explique à Arlequin :

On prétend, lui dit Arlequin, que vous ne portez point de chemise ?—C'était autrefois ma coutume, lui répond le Capitan, parce qu'alors, comme j'étais extrêmement furieux, aussitôt que je me mettais en colère, le poil, que j'avais abondamment sur tout le corps, se dressait, perçait ma chemise de toutes parts et y faisait tant de trous, qu'on l'aurait prise pour une passoire ; mais depuis quelque temps, m'étant fort modéré, je porte du linge comme les autres.

Et le voilà qui entre dans une « boutique de lingère » pour s'acheter une chemise<sup>46</sup>.

Même si son nom est porteur d'associations que j'ai déjà mentionnées, c'est malgré tout en tant que type qu'Armado est désigné dans la plupart des didascalies et préfixes de discours dans les premières éditions (1598 et 1623) : il est « Braggart », le vantard. De même Dull est-il « Constable », Costard « Clown », Jaquenetta « Maid » ou « Wench », Holofernes « Pedant » et Moth « Page » ou « Boy ». Le cas des dames françaises est le plus extrême, puisque lors de leur première apparition en II.i, elles sont désignées par des numéros : 1.Lady, 2.Lady et 3.Lady. La première fois qu'elle est

nommée, Rosaline semble avoir été confondue avec Katherine. La fonction de chacun des personnages, au détriment de son identité individuelle, est soulignée dans la liste fournie par Berowne à l'approche de la Parade des Neuf Preux : « The pedant, the braggart, the hedge-priest, the fool and the boy » (v.ii.534<sup>47</sup>).

Étant donné qu'il n'existait pas de liste des personnages au début de la pièce dans les éditions originales, les différentes formules utilisées pour qualifier Armado dans les listes qui font désormais autorité ont été élaborées plus tardivement par les éditeurs à partir d'expressions tirées de la pièce. Leur traduction en français n'entre donc pas dans le cadre de mon étude. En revanche, le choix de Gisèle Venet et Jean-Michel Déprats de conserver la désignation variable dans les préfixes de discours, qui appellent parfois les personnages par leur nom, parfois par leur fonction, mérite d'être remarqué. Ainsi que l'explique Gisèle Venet dans sa notice, « les variations dans les attributions de répliques des principaux personnages types [Armado, Holofernes, Costard, Nathaniel] ont été respectées [...] afin de ne pas gommer la proximité de ces figures avec celles de la *commedia dell'arte*<sup>48</sup> ». ».

## Le nom est la fonction

Dans une pièce où triomphent l'annomination et plus généralement les figures de synonymie, ainsi que l'a montré Carroll<sup>49</sup>, le dernier mot ne peut pas revenir à la scission du nom et de la fonction. Le court nom du petit Moth, qui condense déjà une polysémie polyglotte explosive puisqu'il est petit insecte, corpuscule, peut-être « mot » (en français dans le texte), ainsi que « page » et « garçon », renvoie également à sa fonction auprès d'Armado. Ainsi que le souligne Boughner dans son article sur la *commedia dell'arte*, Moth correspond tout à fait au type du parasite : « Armado's relations with

the derisive Moth are like those of the boorish master and the jeering servant or parasite of New Comedy. As Moth explains the arts that betray nice wenches, so [...] Gnatho found it necessary to give Thraso elementary instructions in the game of love <sup>50</sup>. » Or, l'un des sens de *moth* en anglais, c'est justement celui de parasite. En effet, le terme *moth* correspond au bas-latin *tinea*, qui signifie par analogie « personne se comportant comme un parasite <sup>51</sup>. » Moth incarne donc l'idéal d'adéquation entre les mots et les choses, le nom et l'essence, dans sa version théâtrale : le nom est la fonction.

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## NOTES

1. William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, v.ii.175-183, éd. W.C. Carroll, « The New Cambridge Shakespeare », Cambridge : CUP, 2009. Les citations données ici sont tirées de cette édition.
2. Voir la note de Carroll dans son édition de la pièce, *op. cit.*, *ap. loc.* Voir également le complément d'information apporté par John Michael Archer, « *Love's Labour's Lost* », in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, vol. III, The Comedies*, éd. Richard Dutton et Jean E. Howard, Malden : Blackwell Publishing, 320-337, p. 326 : « Dutch v[e]el also means plenty ».
3. Questions que j'ai abordées dans mon article « Le costume dans *Love's Labour's Lost*, v.ii : du masque au signe », *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare 26* (2008), accessible en ligne : <http://shakespeare.revues.org/1474> (consulté le 10 février 2015).
4. William Graham Sumner, *Folkways*, Boston : Ginn and Company, 1906, chapitre I, §15 sqq., p. 13 sqq. Texte accessible en ligne : <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24253/24253-h/24253-h.htm> (consulté le 10 février 2015). Incidemment, Sumner donne en épigraphe à son ouvrage trois citations tirées de textes de la Renaissance : une du *Courtisan* de Baldassare Castiglione et deux de Shakespeare (*Hamlet* et *Coriolan*).
5. Voir à ce sujet, entre autres, Tzvetan Todorov, *Nous et les autres, La réflexion française sur la diversité humaine*, Paris : Seuil, 1989.
6. Voir *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. *exotic* adj.1, qui cite Ben Jonson, *Every Man out of his Humor* (1600), iv.iii.30 : « Magique, Witchcraft, or other such Exoticke Artes ».

7. Henri Meschonnic, *Pour une poétique du traduire*, Paris : Verdier, 1999, p. 88-89.
8. *Idem*, *De la langue française*, Paris : Hachette, 1997, p. 210.
9. Antoine Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger. Culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique*, Paris : Gallimard, 1984, p. 16.
10. *Idem*, *La traduction et la lettre, ou, L'auberge du lointain*, Paris : Seuil, 1999, p. 29 sqq. En langue anglaise, Lawrence Venuti utilise les termes de « *domesticating* » (pour la traduction ethnocentriste assimilatrice) et de « *foreignizing* » (pour la traduction qui opère une « défamiliarisation »). Voir Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*, New York : Routledge, 1998.
11. Mylène Lacroix, « Shakespeare au 'banquet' des langues étrang(èr)es », *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* 31 (2014), 1-17, p. 4, accessible en ligne : <http://shakespeare.revues.org/2793> (consulté le 10 février 2015). Cet article consacre de longs développements à *Love's Labour's Lost*.
12. Dans l'in-quarto de 1598 et l'in-folio de 1623, la lettre d'Armado à Jaquenetta (iv.i) est signée « Don Adriana de Armatho ».
13. Orthographié « *Fortuna delaguar* » dans l'in-folio de 1623.
14. Lynne Magnusson, « 'To gase so much at the fine stranger': Armado and the Politics of English in *Love's Labour's Lost* », in *Shakespeare and the Cultures of Performance*, eds. Paul Yachnin et Patricia Badir, Aldershot : Ashgate, 2008, 53-68, p. 67-68. Magnusson analyse l'hypothèse selon laquelle Armado aurait été inspiré lui aussi par un personnage historique, à savoir Don Antonio de Pérez, représentant de Philippe II d'Espagne à la Cour d'Élisabeth, hypothèse défendue par Gustav Ungerer (*A Spaniard in Elizabethan England, The Correspondence of Antonio Perez's Exile*, 2 vols. Londres : Tamesis Books Limited, 1974 et 1976 ; *Anglo-Spanish Relations in Tudor Literature*, 1956 ; New York : AMS Press, 1972, p. 81-154 et 189-211).
15. Voir Carroll in Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
16. W.C. Carroll, *The Great Feast of Language in Love's Labour's Lost*, Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1976, p. 53.
17. Voir *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. *brawl* n.1 (la rixe) et n.3 (la danse) et la définition de Randle Cotgrave dans son *Dictionarie of the French and English tongues*, Londres : Adam Islip, 1611, STC (2<sup>e</sup> éd.) 5830 : « A totter, swing, or swindge; a shake, shog, or shocke: a stirring, an uncertain and inconstant motion; [...] also, a brawle, or daunce, wherein many (men, and women) holding by the hands sometimes in a ring, and otherwise at length, moue all together » (s.v. *Bransle*). Consulté (via EEBO) le 10 février 2015.
18. Voir l'article de Chantal Schütz dans le présent recueil pour le commentaire de Thonoit Arbeau (Jean Tabourot) dans son *Orchésographie* sur le caractère « sauvage » de la canarie, danse espagnole très appréciée en France à la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle.



19. On peut également envisager l'altération phonétique de ces sons en « cocu », autre jeu de mots polyglotte. Voir à ce sujet l'article de Chantal Schütz dans le présent recueil.
20. Patricia Parker, « Polyglot Punning in Shakespeare (and Others) » in *Esthétiques de la nouveauté à la Renaissance*, éd. François Laroque et Franck Lessay, Paris : Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2001, 41-58, p. 51. À la suite de la glose d'A.L. Rowse, certains éditeurs de la pièce reformulent « haud credo » en « auld grey doe ». Sur la dimension « babélieuse » du plurilinguisme comme pratique d'adaptation dans un monde d'après la Chute, voir l'article de Sophie Chiari dans le présent recueil.
21. Parker, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*. Voir également son analyse de l'énigme de « l'envoi » : « a riddling ending in a “goose” (the French “oie” already contained within “envoi”), which may be incapable of any solution or answer, until we reflect that the Latin for “goose” is the word “anser” itself » (*Ibid.*).
22. William Shakespeare, *Peines d'amour perdues*, dans la traduction de :  
 Pierre Le Tourneur, in *Shakespeare traduit de l'anglais*, Paris : Mérimot, 1782 ;  
 François-Victor Hugo (1860), in *Œuvres complètes*, éd. J-B Fort, Levallois-Perret : Cercle du bibliophile, 1967 ;  
 Émile Montégut, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome II, Paris : Hachette, 1867 ;  
 Pierre Messiaen, in *Les Comédies*, Paris : Desclée de Brouwer, 1939 ;  
 Jean-Louis Supervielle, in *Œuvres complètes* éd. bilingue P. Leyris et H. Evans, Paris : Formes et Reflets, 1955 ;  
 Annie Berthet, éd. bilingue, Paris : les Belles Lettres, 1969 ;  
 Jean-Michel Déprats, Seyssel : Comp'act, 1990 ;  
 Jean Malaplate, in *Comédies*, éd. bilingue M. Grivelet et G. Monsarrat, Paris : R. Laffont, 2000.
23. Frances Yates voit dans Berowne/Brown une allusion à l'Italien Giordano Bruno (*A Study of Love's Labour's Lost*, Cambridge : CUP, 1936, chapitre 5, p. 89-101).
24. William Shakespeare, *Peines d'amour perdues*, trad. Jean-Michel Déprats, in *Œuvres complètes*, V. *Comédies*, éd. Jean-Michel Déprats et Gisèle Venet, Paris : Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2013, p. 1341, note 3.
25. Nathanaël est mentionné en tant que disciple de Jésus dans l'Évangile selon Jean (1.45-51). Dans la pièce de Shakespeare, on peut dire que ce personnage religieux (« curate ») apparaît comme le « disciple » de Holofernes.
26. François Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapitre XIII, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome I, Paris : Classiques Garnier, 1991, p. 60.
27. En réalité, Le Tourneur appelle Dull « Doll ».
28. Voir Samuel Johnson [1709-1784], « Preface to Shakespeare », in *The Works of Samuel Johnson*, Londres : Rivington et al., 1823, Volume 10, p. 149 : « a quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it. »
29. Shakespeare, trad. Le Tourneur, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 240.

31. La non-traduction de ces trois noms est d'autant plus surprenante, même si l'on tient compte du peu d'intérêt que portait Le Tourneur aux jeux de mots, qu'il a traduit, dans le même volume, les noms de *Froth* (« Écume ») et *Elbow* (« Le Coude ») dans *Measure for Measure*.

32. « Trogne » peut également faire penser à « trognon » et ainsi rappeler un fruit (je remercie Charlotte Coffin de m'avoir suggéré cette interprétation).

33. Le terme « moustique » apparaît en français au début du dix-septième siècle (voir l'entrée dans le Dictionnaire étymologique du CNRTL, accessible en ligne : <http://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/moustique>, consulté le 10 février 2015). Depuis le début du vingtième siècle, il s'emploie pour désigner un petit enfant. Quant à Moucheron, qui a lui aussi ce sens figuré, il est attesté depuis le début du quatorzième siècle (*Ibid.*, accessible ici : <http://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/moucheron>, consulté le 10 février 2015).

34. À l'exception peut-être de « Phalène »...

35. Voir à ce sujet les remarques de Montégut sur ses propres choix : « Nous nous sommes abstenus jusqu'à présent de traduire les noms composés en assez grand nombre qui se rencontrent dans les comédies de Shakespeare, par des équivalents français qui puissent en rendre la signification généralement satirique. Ces noms composés ont un double rôle, ils nomment un personnage et ils peignent un caractère. Si on les traduit par des équivalents, ils continuent bien à désigner un caractère, mais ils cessent de désigner un personnage réel et ne désignent plus qu'un être de raison, une personnification morale. Cependant nous ferons une exception pour les personnages des pièces qui se passent en France, *Peines d'amour perdues*, *Comme il vous plaira*, *Tout est bien qui finit bien*, parce que les noms composés qui s'y rencontrent étant empruntés au vocabulaire de la langue anglaise, ne peuvent représenter des noms français. Jamais un paysan français ne s'est appelé *Costard*, en revanche plus d'un paysan français s'est appelé et s'appelle *Grossetête*, ce qui est la traduction exacte du mot *Costard* » (*op. cit.*, p. 411).

36. Son véritable nom n'est pas donné dans les textes qui le mentionnent.

37. Thomas Churchyard, « The phantasticall Monarkes Epitaphe », *A pleasaunte laborinth*, Londres : John Kyngston, 1580, STC (2<sup>e</sup> éd.) 5250, p. 7 r<sup>o</sup>-v<sup>o</sup> (orthographe modernisée par mes soins).

38. Nicolas Boileau, *L'art poétique*, III.129, in *Œuvres de M. Boileau Despréaux*, Genève : Fabri & Barrillot, 1716, Tome 1, p. 322 (accessible en ligne sur : <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5663056d/f361.image.r=>, consulté le 10 février 2015).

39. Carroll rappelle aussi que l'adjectif « thrasonical » utilisé par Holofernes pour qualifier Armado (v.i.13) dérive du nom d'un personnage de *Eunuque*, pièce de l'auteur latin Térence, « the proper name once again having become descriptive of a class » (Carroll, *Great Feast*, p. 19).

40. C. Daniel Boughner, « Don Armado and the *Commedia dell'Arte* », *Studies in Philology* 37, 1940 : 201-224, p. 202-208. Sur la *commedia dell'arte*, voir notamment l'ouvrage de synthèse de Claude Bourqui, qui rappelle que « le *Capitano* n'est soldat qu'en paroles » ; lui et les autres personnages types « évoluent à la surface de la réalité de référence qu'ils évoquent dans leurs propos » (*La Commedia dell'arte*, Paris : Armand Collin, 2011, p. 90). Sur l'influence de cette forme théâtrale sur Shakespeare, voir Kathleen Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy*, Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1934 ; Allardyce Nicoll, *The World of Harlequin: A Critical Study of the Commedia dell'Arte*, Cambridge : CUP, 1987 ; Frances K. Barasch, « Shakespeare and *commedia dell'arte*: an intertextual approach », *Shakespeare Yearbook* 10, 1999 : 374-401 ; Michele Marrapodi (éd.), *Italian Culture in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, Aldershot : Ashgate, 2007 ; la synthèse de Louise George Clubb, « Looking Back on Shakespeare and Italian Theater », *Renaissance Drama, New Series* 36/37, *Italy in the Drama of Europe*, 2010 : 3-19.
41. Boughner, *op. cit.*, p. 212.
42. Antoine Girard dit Tabarin [1584-1626], *Œuvres complètes de Tabarin : avec les Rencontres, fantaisies et coq-à-l'âne facétieux du baron de Gratelard, et divers opuscules publiés séparément sous le nom ou à propos de Tabarin. Tome 2 / Le tout précédé d'une introduction et d'une bibliographie tabarinique par Gustave Aventin*, Paris : P. Jannet, 1858, p. 141-142.
43. Voir à ce sujet mon article, « La Langue de Shakespeare, l'accent de Tony Harrison : Quand *matter* rime avec *water* », *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* 31 (2014), accessible en ligne : <http://shakespeare.revues.org/2803> (consulté le 10 février 2015).
44. Ainsi que le souligne Boughner à propos des prédécesseurs de Shakespeare dans l'adaptation de personnages stéréotypés de la comédie latine ou italienne sur les scènes anglaises, « *Roister Doister* may have furnished a prototype of the Terentian *miles* into whose making have gone English elements. *Basilisco* in *Soliman and Perseda* bears a name on the order of Armado, cultivates an erudite language full of inkhorn terms [...]. Again, Lyly's *Tophas* is a fusion of classical, Italian, and native materials shaped to satirize some outlandish aspirant who mimicked gentlemen and imitated the learned and elaborate forms of the Court. Shakespeare, however, succeeded far beyond his predecessors in the task of domesticating the braggart soldier on the Elizabethan stage » (*op. cit.*, p. 220).
45. Christophe Camard, « 'Be acquainted with my two zanies here' : l'influence du théâtre professionnel italien sur le théâtre élisabéthain », *Cahiers Shakespeare en devenir* 8 (2014), *Le texte-Italie dans l'œuvre de Shakespeare*, §19, accessible en ligne : <http://shakespeare.edel.univ-poitiers.fr/index.php?id=737> (consulté le 10 février 2015).
46. Cité par Maurice Sand, *Masques et bouffons (comédie italienne) : texte et dessins*, Volume 1, Paris : Maurice Lévy, 1860, p. 199.
47. Voir aussi son allusion au « zany » Boyet (v.ii.463).
48. Gisèle Venet, Notice à la pièce dans Shakespeare, *Comédies*, *op. cit.*, p. 1336.
49. Carroll, *op. cit.*, p. 20 sqq.

50. Boughner, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

51. Voir *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. *moth* n.1, sens 3 et la citation du *Polychronicon* de Ranulf Higdon traduit par John Trevisa (antérieur à 1384), qui appelle les parasites de Cour « moths [L. tinea] » et « rattons ».

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## RÉSUMÉS

Située en Navarre, l'action de *Love's Labour's Lost* met en contact des personnages français aux noms plus ou moins anglicisés (les nobles de France et de Navarre), un soldat espagnol fanfaron au nom évocateur de l'« Armada » réputée « invincible » et néanmoins défaite par les Anglais en 1588 (Don Adriano de Armado), des pédants aux noms tirés de la Bible (Holofernes et Nathaniel) et des personnages « secondaires » aux noms anglais renvoyant à des particularités physiques ou intellectuelles (Costard, Dull, Moth).

Dans une pièce où de nombreux jeux de mots reposent sur l'onomastique, il me semble que la réflexion sur les apparences qui se développe à travers l'échec des signes à révéler l'identité passe également par les noms propres. Afin de mieux comprendre la tension entre ethnocentrisme et exotisme qui structure cette pièce cosmopolite, j'étudie les différentes traductions des noms propres en français depuis la version de Pierre Le Tourneur (1776-1782) jusqu'à celle de Jean-Michel Déprats (1990, 2013) en passant par celles de Hugo (1859-1866), Montégut (1867-1873), Messiaen (1938-1939), Supervielle (1955), Berthet (1969) et Malaplate (2000).

Set in Navarre, *Love's Labour's Lost* brings together French characters whose names have been more or less accurately anglicised (the noblemen of Navarre and noblewomen of France), a Spanish braggart whose name is reminiscent of the supposedly “invincible” Armada that was scattered by the English fleet in 1588 (Don Adriano de Armado), a pair of pedants whose names originate in the Bible (Holofernes and Nathaniel) and “minor” characters with English names which refer to physical or intellectual features (Costard, Dull, Moth).

As many puns rely on onomastics, names serve to question the capacity of signs to express identity, thus fuelling the reflection on appearances and reality that is at the core of the play. In order to better understand the tension between ethnocentrism and exoticism that characterises this cosmopolitan play, I will study a few examples of how the characters' names have been translated into French over the centuries, from Pierre Le Tourneur's

version (1776-1782) to Jean-Michel Déprats's (1990, 2013) through translations by Hugo (1859-1866), Montégut (1867-1873), Messiaen (1938-1939), Supervielle (1955), Berthet (1969), and Malaplate (2000).

## INDEX

**Mots-clés** : annomination, commedia dell'arte, jeu de mots, onomastique, Peines d'amour perdues, traductologie, traduction

**Keywords** : annominatio, commedia dell'arte, Love's Labour's Lost, pun, translation, translation studies

## AUTEUR

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# La danse, le chant, la représentation scénique

*Dancing, Singing, Performing*

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# Entre tensions textuelles et spectaculaires : Écrire le masque et la danse dans *Love's Labour's Lost*

Samuel Cuisinier-Delorme

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*Love's Labour's Lost* est l'une des pièces de Shakespeare où la dimension chorégraphique est la plus prégnante, bien qu'aucune danse n'y soit exécutée. Un réseau lexical abondant<sup>1</sup> traverse la pièce, complété par une série d'allusions, de métaphores, de commentaires plus ou moins en lien avec le champ sémantique de la chorégraphie. Le metteur en scène Darko Tresnja souligne d'ailleurs que « *Love's Labour's Lost* est presque chorégraphiée sur le papier<sup>2</sup>. » Dans cette pièce méta-dramatique par excellence, le spectaculaire, embrassant théâtre et danse, y est longuement discuté. La danse a alors toute sa place dans le discours puisqu'« elle n'est pas non plus sans rapport avec la rhétorique<sup>3</sup>, » comme le remarque Lucien de Samosate dans son *Éloge de la danse*.

## 1. Les usages de la danse dans le théâtre de Shakespeare

En préambule, il convient de rappeler les usages chorégraphiques dans le théâtre de Shakespeare. La danse apparaît à trois niveaux du

jeu. Il s'agit tout d'abord d'un élément de mise en scène : les didascalies, externes et internes, prévoient son interprétation et son exécution sur le plateau. Elle offre, dans sa forme élémentaire, un intermède distrayant pour le spectateur. Intégrée de manière plus complexe, tout en conservant sa fonction divertissante, elle permet des avancées narratives (par exemple, dans la scène de bal de *Romeo and Juliet*, l'intrigue est intrinsèquement liée à la danse). Néanmoins, son absence scénique ne signe pas sa disparition définitive : l'art de Terpsichore ressurgit en effet de manière linguistique. L'anatomie chorégraphiée est ainsi lexicalisée. Évacuée de la représentation, la danse connaît une renaissance en contaminant le texte par des mentions régulières. Enfin, la chorégraphie participe à un mouvement structurel et symbolique : la danse est cosmique, mais la variation du motif tend parfois vers le tragique. Elle revêt, dans le répertoire shakespearien et dans la culture de la Renaissance, une dimension idéologique. Elle véhicule une représentation de la société et du monde ; ses multiples usages en attestent. Toutefois, sa dimension technique est toujours occultée : Shakespeare n'impose jamais de forme chorégraphique et il n'en décrit aucune. La dimension esthétique du geste est « délaissée » au profit de sa fonction expressive et rhétorique. Au sens premier du verbe, c'est-à-dire « représenter (une notion abstraite) sous une forme matérielle et visible <sup>4</sup> », la danse *incarne* un discours parfois proche de la philosophie.

L'analyse générique et chronologique du motif chorégraphique dans le théâtre de Shakespeare confirme que la danse est, pour citer à nouveau Lucien, « loin d'être un de ces arts faciles qu'on apprend sans mal <sup>5</sup>. » Le dramaturge fait montre d'une connaissance de plus en plus subtile et habile de l'art chorégraphique, et son intégration se fait de plus en plus complexe. Dans les pièces historiques, écrites



essentiellement au début de sa carrière, la danse est uniquement un support d'images métaphoriques, lesquelles permettent notamment de prolonger la théorie du corps politique (*body politic*) qui dessine des analogies entre le corps humain et le pouvoir. Néanmoins, les représentations du pouvoir par la danse dans le théâtre de Shakespeare soulignent essentiellement la discorde du royaume et donnent généralement l'image d'un monarque inexpérimenté sur les plans politique et militaire : le dramaturge renverse l'idéologie selon laquelle un homme éduqué est un homme qui sait danser. La scène de bal de *Romeo and Juliet* (I.v) est la première à spécifier l'exécution d'une danse sur le plateau<sup>6</sup>. Les premières comédies, dans la continuité des pièces historiques, ne comportent aucun passage chorégraphié, alors que les suivantes – *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It* – se concluent, quant à elles, par une danse afin de rappeler la réconciliation des couples et célébrer leurs noces. Elle vient mettre un point final à la suite de péripéties ayant troublé l'ordre initial. On remarque donc que l'écriture de *Love's Labour's Lost* correspond, sur le plan chorégraphique, à un tournant de l'œuvre de Shakespeare : cette comédie apparaît comme le point de départ d'une intégration croissante de la danse. L'art chorégraphique est omniprésent dans cette pièce tout comme dans *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, vraisemblablement écrite à la même période, mais son incorporation est diamétralement opposée dans l'une et l'autre de ces deux pièces. Shakespeare calque la structure diégétique de la première sur une forme chorégraphique<sup>7</sup>, sans qu'aucune danse ne soit exécutée. À l'inverse, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* est une célébration, voire une consécration, de la danse : les artisans, les nobles et les fées embrassent l'art de Terpsichore, unissant macrocosme et

microcosme à travers des rondes et d'autres formes chorégraphiques.

Ainsi, dans *Love's Labour's Lost*, l'essence même de la danse est rejetée hors cadre – scénique et diégétique : l'exécution chorégraphique est occultée de la scénographie. Néanmoins, la description des déplacements et de l'occupation de l'espace au sein des pièces est une forme chorégraphique envisagée de manière lexicale. Le texte shakespearien s'écrit alors comme une série d'hypotypes de la danse articulées autour de réseaux sémantiques formés par les répliques et les didascalies.

## 2. Ecrire la danse : le « masque verbal »

La scène finale de la pièce (V.ii) participe à une expérience iconique et met en œuvre, selon l'expression empruntée à Anne Ubersfeld, des « matrices textuelles de représentativité <sup>8</sup>. » Par sa structure, le dénouement de la comédie s'apparente à un masque, spectacle de cour intégrant théâtre, danse et musique dans une scénographie complexe.

Dans les pièces de Shakespeare, la forme du « masque » n'est globalement pas jacobéenne mais élisabéthaine. La chronologie explique cet état de fait : la plupart des pièces où le terme est mentionné ont été écrites, sous le règne d'Élisabeth I<sup>ère</sup> entre 1590 et 1600 ; il faut alors le comprendre comme *mascarade* ou *momerie*, c'est-à-dire comme une danse masquée. Le divertissement se compose essentiellement d'une entrée suivie d'une danse :

The word always refers to an Elizabethan type of masque, consisting of an entrance and a dance. [...] Not only is the linguistic usage constant, but Shakespeare has a tendency to couple 'masque' with 'revel' or 'dance' in a general allusion to festivity, destroying any particularity in the conception of a masque <sup>9</sup>.

Les pièces ayant recours à ces formes chorégraphiées les utilisent non pas comme esthétique de la scénographie, mais comme ressort dramatique. Elles permettent une avancée de l'histoire : la révélation est au cœur de ces danses et fournit généralement des informations que seul le déguisement peut divulguer. Comme le souligne Jan Kott dans *The Gender of Rosalind*, « le déguisement voile mais surtout dévoile et met à nu <sup>10</sup>. »

La dernière scène de *Love's Labour's Lost*, (V.ii) met en jeu des masques en tant qu'accessoires, mais les personnages ne dansent pas, malgré la musique :

ROSALINE. Play music, then! [*Music plays*] Nay, you must do it soon.  
Not yet? No dance!  
(V.ii.211-12) <sup>11</sup>

Les hommes ont renoncé aux plaisirs frivoles sans parvenir à respecter leur vœu, et les femmes ne sont pas prêtes à se laisser courtiser par eux, ou du moins le laissent-elles croire pour que les séducteurs poursuivent leur dessein. La scène est construite autour de situations burlesques mises en scène par les personnages eux-mêmes :

ROSALINE. Which of the vizards was it that you wore?  
BEROWNE. Where, when, what vizard? Why demand you this?  
ROSALINE. There, then, that vizard, that superfluous case  
That hid the worse and showed the better face.  
KING. [*Aside*] We are descried. They'll mock us now downright.  
DUMAINE. [*Aside*] Let us confess and turn it to a jest.  
(V.ii.385-90)

Le public, dans la confiance de la supercherie de la scène, est complice de la mauvaise foi des personnages. Rosaline se défause : elle critique l'accessoire alors qu'elle a, elle aussi, utilisé un masque. Berowne et Ferdinand font quant à eux part de leur étonnement et prétendent ne pas en avoir porté. Même démasqué, chaque

personnage s'affaire à tenir un rôle. Prises à leur propre jeu, les femmes feignent donc ne pas reconnaître les hommes qui leur font la cour, déguisés en Moscovites <sup>12</sup> :

ROSALINE. What would these strangers? Know their minds, Boyet.  
 If they do speak our language, 'tis our will  
 That some plain man recount their purposes.  
 Know what they would.  
 (V.ii.175-79)

Les deux groupes se confrontent tout au long de cette scène finale sous la forme de micro-séquences qui reprennent la structure du masque Tudor. Celui-ci se composait généralement de l'entrée de personnages masqués et costumés qui arrivaient de manière impromptue lors d'un banquet <sup>13</sup>. Accompagnés d'un Présentateur, ils exécutaient une danse avant de se mêler aux convives. L'entrée était parfois précédée d'un prologue pour expliquer la venue de ces invités inattendus. Shakespeare détourne ici certains codes de cette forme spectaculaire :

<p>1<sup>er</sup> masque</p>	<p>Les dames se masquent          « The trumpet sounds. Be masked; the maskers come. » (157)</p> <p>Entrée des messieurs  <i>Enter Blackamoors with music [Moth,] the Boy with a speech, and the rest of the lords disguised [as Russians]. (157.2)</i></p> <p>Echanges en couple / apartés :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rosaline/King (203-229) <i>They converse apart (229.1)</i></li> <li>- Berowne/Princess (230-237) <i>They converse apart (237.1)</i></li> <li>- Dumaine/Maria (238-241) <i>They converse apart (241.1)</i></li> <li>- Katherine/Longaville (242-255) <i>They converse apart (255.1)</i></li> </ul> <p>Sortie des messieurs  <i>Exeunt [the King, lords and attendants] (264.1)</i></p>
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Intermède	<p>Discussion des dames (265-309)</p> <p>Sortie des dames <i>Exeunt [the Princess and ladies] (309.1)</i></p> <p>Entrée des messieurs <i>Enter the KING and the rest [BEROWNE, LONGAVILLE, and DUMAINE, as themselves] (309.2-3)</i></p> <p>Discussion des messieurs (310- 336)</p>
2 <sup>e</sup> masque	<p>Entrée des dames <i>Enter the ladies [ the PRINCESS, ROSALINE, MARIA, and KATHERINE, with BOYET] (336.1-2)</i></p> <p>Échanges en couple :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- King/Princess (339-363)</li> <li>- Rosaline/Berowne (364-430)</li> <li>- King/Princess (431-442)</li> <li>- Tous les quatre (443-483)</li> </ul>
Intermède	<p>Spectacle des Neuf Preux (484-690)</p> <p>Interruption du spectacle (691)</p>
Danse collective	<p>Discussion commune (691-760)</p> <p>Échanges en couple / apartés :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- King/Princess (761-790) <i>They converse apart (790.1)</i></li> <li>- Dumaine/Katherine (791-800) <i>They converse apart (800.1)</i></li> <li>- Maria/Longaville (801-804) <i>They converse apart (804.1)</i></li> <li>- Berowne/Rosaline (805-839)</li> </ul> <p>Discussion commune (840-856)</p>
Intermède	Chants (857-894)
Sortie	Sortie des messieurs et des dames (896.1)

La scène repose sur des oppositions symétriques : les groupes (hommes/femmes) et les couples, scènes d'ensemble et apartés, entrées et sorties... Le groupe est une matrice autour de laquelle gravitent les couples : ceux-ci sont contraints de respecter l'action collective. On remarquera que l'initiative est toujours celle d'un groupe, jamais celle d'un individu. Si c'est le cas, le particulier défend toujours une position collective. Les déplacements se limitent à la didascalie « *They converse apart* » ; la préposition impose une mise à l'écart, excluant de fait le spectateur du reste de la conversation.

La première entrée des gentilshommes marque le début d'un masque de forme Tudor, se présentant comme une arrivée impromptue de personnages masqués qui se mêlent aux convives. À sa suite, un intermède permet des commentaires sur le divertissement, comme si le spectateur était convié à entrer dans les coulisses. Les seigneurs ne sont plus déguisés (*Enter... as themselves*). Ce masque est suivi d'un second, initié cette fois-ci par les dames accompagnées de Boyet, dans l'emploi du Présentateur. Les masques sont tombés, et cette fois-ci, les couples sont réunis.

Le spectacle des Neuf Preux est un intermède mis en abyme : il est enchâssé dans une séquence qui relève d'un divertissement plus ou moins improvisé. Interrompue, la représentation laisse place à la réunion des quatre couples. Toutefois, celle-ci est empêchée par les chants puis par la sortie, de part et d'autre de la scène, de chacun des groupes. Cette dernière partie forme un « triptyque » sous la configuration ensemble / couple / ensemble et rappelle les danses collectives des masques jacobéens, plus tardifs. D'un point de vue historique, ces trois micro-séquences, assimilables à des « masques verbaux », montrent la fluctuation d'une forme qui n'est pas encore

fixée mais qui, en cette fin de XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, porte en germe la structure du masque jacobéen.

Le spectacle des Neuf Preux <sup>14</sup> contient lui aussi une forte « charge chorégraphique ». Anthony Dull propose à Holofernes ses services de danseur et/ou de musicien pour la parade que le roi veut offrir à la princesse :

HOLOFERNES. *Allons! We will employ thee.*

DULL. I'll make one in a dance, or so; or I will play on the tabor to the Worthies, and let them dance the hay.

HOLOFERNES. Most dull, honest Dull! To our sport, away! *Exeunt*  
(V.i.122-25)

L'enchâssement de ce spectacle, dont le thème était très répandu à la Renaissance <sup>15</sup>, a pour but de divertir les femmes et offrir aux hommes l'opportunité de se montrer sous leur meilleur jour. Paradoxalement, ces derniers seront masqués et déguisés. Leur tentative reste vaine, et le spectacle s'avère parodique et grotesque (d'autant qu'ils ne sont que cinq pour incarner neuf personnages). La représentation, menacée par les altercations opposant Armado à Dull, ne sera pas menée à son terme.

Dull propose, comme nous l'avons vu, ses services de danseur ou de musicien pour le spectacle. L'antonomase laisse deviner les capacités artistiques du personnage, selon la polysémie de l'adjectif *dull* :

1. Not quick in intelligence or mental perception; slow of understanding;
2. Wanting sensibility or keenness of perception in the bodily senses and feelings [...]. In dialect use, *esp.* Hard of hearing, deaf.
3. Slow in motion or action <sup>16</sup>.

L'onomastique indique donc clairement que le personnage n'est pas apte à participer à la représentation. Son manque de discernement (sens 1) l'amène à envisager d'exécuter une farandole, danse médiévale paysanne en décalage avec la finalité du spectacle des Neuf Preux : cette forme chorégraphique ne sied pas aux héros

mythiques et n'est pas propice à la séduction. Au contraire, une danse militaire, glorifiant les personnages, serait à prescrire ici. Dans son dictionnaire de la danse, G. Desrat souligne la « rapidité proverbiale <sup>17</sup> » de la farandole qui contraste ici avec la lenteur supposée de Dull (sens 3). Ce manque de vivacité n'est pas non plus à son avantage lorsqu'il suggère de jouer du tambourin pour accompagner la farandole : alliée à des problèmes de rapidité d'exécution, la surdité (sens dialectal de *dull*) du gendarme risque de rendre le rythme discordant. Enfin, son incapacité à percevoir des sensations corporelles (sens 2) ferait de lui un piètre danseur. En d'autres termes, la kinesthésie (définie comme la « forme de sensibilité qui, indépendamment de la vue et du toucher, renseigne d'une manière spécifique sur la position et les déplacements des différentes parties du corps <sup>18</sup> ») est nécessaire dans l'appréhension du geste chorégraphié, et Dull semble en être dépourvu. Perplexe et dépassé par la situation, ce dernier participe sans le vouloir au comique et au grotesque de la scène :

HOLOFERNES. *Via*, goodman Dull! Thou hast spoken no word all this while.  
DULL. Nor understood none neither, sir.  
(V.i.120-22)

### 3. De l'absence de danse, ou comment expliquer l'épilogue

Afin d'analyser cette scène dans son ensemble sur le plan chorégraphique, il convient désormais d'étudier l'absence de danse à la fin de la pièce, cet « épilogue chorégraphique » attendu, mais manquant.

La symbolique de la danse dans le théâtre de Shakespeare s'explique en grande partie par le genre des pièces. Certaines tendances se



dégagent en considérant les quatre grandes catégories du répertoire shakespearien (pièces historiques, tragédies, comédies et romances tardives), comme le résume Nancy Isenberg :

In the comedies, dancing typically figures harmony and order restored, in the tragedies it tends to signal ironically the opposite. In Shakespeare's later plays, mostly romances, the themes of order and discord are woven together through the verbal and performative discourses of dance. The history plays never call for dancing on the stage, nor do the Roman plays, with the one exception of the Egyptian Bacchanal <sup>19</sup> .

Alors que les premières comédies ne comportent aucun passage chorégraphié, les suivantes – comme *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It* – se concluent par une danse afin de rappeler la réconciliation des couples et de célébrer leurs noces <sup>20</sup> . Celle-ci répond donc aux codes de la comédie, dans laquelle le dénouement « débouche presque toujours sur une conclusion optimiste (mariage, réconciliation, reconnaissance) <sup>21</sup> . » Elle vient mettre un point final, de manière festive, à la suite de péripéties ayant troublé l'ordre initial :

Shakespeare's comedies often end with a dance, we have been assured, because they move from confusion to order, from misfortune to prosperity, and dancing is an image of concord that celebrates this festive resolution <sup>22</sup> .

Le schéma des comédies repose en partie sur le désordre amoureux. La réconciliation qui s'ensuit fait office de tableau harmonieux, objet de quête aussitôt que l'équilibre des sentiments a été perturbé. Le dénouement intègre trois *modi operandi* différents pour expliciter la réunion des personnages, avant leur sortie de scène :

- l'expression verbale (*The Taming of the Shrew*) ;
- le départ pour un banquet (*The Comedy of Errors*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) : « [The communal departure for a banquet or feast, the traditional celebration of unity and

concord,] embraces not only the lovers, but all the other characters who can share the celebration <sup>23</sup>. »

- l'exécution d'une danse (*A Midsummer Night's Dream, Much Ado about Nothing, As You Like It*), dont sont privés les scélérats. Ces personnages discordants sont en effet exclus du schème harmonieux que symbolise l'acte dansé.

Ces trois modes opératoires peuvent être combinés. Toutefois, le dénouement de *Love's Labour's Lost* fait exception et ne répond à aucune de ces catégories à cause du report de la célébration des noces douze mois et un jour plus tard. La danse, en toute logique, ne peut avoir lieu. Dans son étude de la pièce, Harley Granville-Barker suggère pourtant que le chant allégorique qui clôt la pièce est nécessairement accompagné d'une danse :

But this is not the end, for the end must not be melancholy. The countryfolk have yet to sing and dance their antic, a little crowd of them, dressed to match  
daisies pied and violets blue,  
And lady-smocks, all silver-white,  
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue...  
The comedy of affectations comes to its full close upon notes of pastoral freshness and simplicity <sup>24</sup>.

Alors que Shakespeare a pris soin de n'aborder la danse que par le langage dans cette comédie, pourquoi y aurait-il nécessairement une chorégraphie à la fin de la pièce ? Aucun élément textuel et/ou contextuel ne permet de confirmer ou d'infirmer l'hypothèse de Granville-Barker, qui est mentionnée (mais n'est pas tranchée) dans l'étude d'Alan Brissenden <sup>25</sup>. Ce dernier remarque néanmoins que « le monde de la pièce déborde de la scène et embrasse le nôtre, celui du public <sup>26</sup>. » Dès lors, comme il était de tradition de danser avec le public à la fin d'une représentation, ce moment de « communion chorégraphiée » entre acteurs et spectateurs pourrait célébrer cette

union rejetée hors de la diégèse, et symboliserait l'harmonie non atteinte dans la fiction.

## Conclusion

*Love's Labour's Lost* n'a de cesse de célébrer la danse par les paroles, sans que jamais un pas ne soit esquissé. Le texte se donne à lire comme un espace chorégraphique et chorégraphié, un préambule méta-chorégraphique dans lequel Shakespeare ouvre la voie à l'inclusion grandissante du motif dansé. Toutefois, lorsqu'il aborde le registre tragique au tournant du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, les danses se font plus rares. Elles sont exécutées dans la première moitié des drames, avant que l'acmé ne fasse profondément et irrémédiablement voler en éclat la fausse harmonie qui émane des personnages.

Le dramaturge affine son utilisation du motif jusqu'à l'inverser dans les romances tardives. Il y remet alors en question la notion d'harmonie à laquelle la danse a toujours été associée. À bien y regarder, en privant le spectateur d'une danse sur le plateau lors du dénouement de *Love's Labour's Lost*, Shakespeare ne suggérerait-il pas un renversement précoce du symbole chorégraphique, signalant par là même un détournement bien plus profond des codes de la comédie ?

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## NOTES

1. On ne compte pas moins de douze occurrences du terme *dance*, et la basse-danse (V.ii), le branle (III.i), la gigue (III.i et IV.iii) et la canarie (III.i) sont mentionnées.

2. Ce propos de Darko Tresnjak, metteur en scène, provient du dossier de présentation de *Titus Andronicus* pour le Festival Stratford (Canada) en 2011 : « *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Titus Andronicus* are practically choreographed on the page – precisely and intricately plotted dances of love and death, rounds of seduction and revenge, respectively. »
3. Lucien, *Éloge de la danse*, traduit du grec par Claude Terreaux, Paris : Arléa, 2007, p. 22-23.
4. « Incarner », Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, CNRTL, en ligne, consulté le 27 janvier 2015 : <<http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/incarner>>.
5. Lucien, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
6. William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, The Arden Shakespeare, Second Series, ed. Brian Gibbons, Londres : Thomson Learning, 1980, p. 115 : « *Music plays and they dance.* » (I.v.26.1).
7. Voir Samuel Cuisinier-Delorme, « L'écriture chorégraphique comme matrice textuelle de *Love's Labour's Lost* » in *Love's Labour's Lost de Shakespeare, ou l'art de séduire*, Cynos, volume 31, n°1, éd. Christian Gutleben, Paris : L'Harmattan, 2015, p. 95-110.
8. Anne Ubersfeld, *Lire le théâtre I*, Paris : Belin Lettres Sup, 1996, p. 16-17.
9. Suzanne Gossett, « The Term 'Masque' in Shakespeare and Fletcher, and The Coxcomb », *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Rice University, Vol. 13, No. 2, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (Spring, 1974), p. 289-90.
10. Jan Kott, *The Gender of Rosalind, Interpretations: Shakespeare, Büchner, Gautier*, Northwestern University Press, 1992, p. 17: « Disguise not only covers but also uncovers and bares » (ma traduction).
11. William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, The New Cambridge Shakespeare, ed. William C. Carroll, Cambridge : CUP, 2009.
12. Le costume renvoie au domaine chorégraphique, dans le sens où la moscovite est le « nom d'une ancienne contre-danse française, sorte de pot-pourri composé de figures empruntées à diverses danses et exécutée par un nombre de couples *ad libitum*. » Voir G. Desrat, « Moscovite », *Dictionnaire de la Danse, historique, théorique, pratique et bibliographique ; depuis l'origine de la danse jusqu'à nos jours*, Charleston : Nabu Press, 2010 [1895], p. 249-50.
13. Voir *Henry VIII* (I.iv) ou *Romeo and Juliet* (I.v) pour des exemples de masques.
14. Motif symbolisant les valeurs et vertus du parfait chevalier, composé de trois héros païens (Hector, Alexandre le Grand, Jules César), trois personnages de l'Ancien Testament (Josué, Judas Macchabée, le roi David) et trois héros chrétiens (Godefroi de Bouillon, le roi Arthur et Charlemagne).
15. « La popularité des Neuf Preux se traduit par une abondante iconographie, ils sont présents sur les tapisseries, les peintures murales, les gravures, les cartes à jouer jusqu'à la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. » (Sophie Cassages-Brouquet, « Penthésilée, reine des Amazones et Preuse, une image de la femme guerrière à la fin du Moyen Âge ». Source en ligne, consultée le 27 janvier 2015 : <http://clio.revues.org/1400?&id=1400> )

16. « Dull », *OED*, en ligne, consulté le 27 janvier 2015 : <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/58304>>.
  17. G. Desrat, « Farandole », *op. cit.*, p. 139.
  18. « Kinesthésie », Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, CNRTL, en ligne, consulté le 27 janvier 2015 : <<http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/kinesthésie>>.
  19. Nancy Isenberg, « Dancing with the Stars in Antony and Cleopatra », in *Questioning Bodies in Shakespeare's Rome*, eds. Maria Del Sapio Garbero, Nancy Isenberg,
  20. Bien que *Twelfth Night* compte deux mariages, aucune danse n'accompagne le dénouement de cette comédie. Cette absence marque-t-elle une impossibilité d'atteindre l'harmonie ? Shakespeare réutilise ici les codes et procédés de ses pièces précédentes, mais il introduit dans sa pièce le doute et la mélancolie.
  21. Patrice Pavis, « Comédie », *Dictionnaire du théâtre*, Paris : Armand Collin, 2002, p. 52.
  22. Skiles Howard, *The Politics of Courtly Dancing in Early Modern England*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1998, p. 69.
  23. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
  24. Harley Granville-Barker, *Granville-Barker's Prefaces to Shakespeare, Love's Labour's Lost*, Londres : Nick Hern Books, 1993, p. 47.
  25. Voir Alan Brissenden, *Shakespeare and the Dance*, Alton : Dance Books Ltd, 1981, p. 37 et p. 41.
  26. Alan Brissenden, *op. cit.*, p. 37: « The world of the play overflows the stage and embraces ours, the audience's. » (ma traduction)
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## RÉSUMÉS

Cet article propose dans un premier temps l'étude des différents usages de la danse dans le théâtre de Shakespeare (de sa représentation sur scène à sa valeur symbolique) puis une lecture de la scène finale (V.ii) de *Love's Labour's Lost* à travers le prisme de la danse. Si aucune chorégraphie n'est exécutée sur le plateau dans cette comédie, de nombreuses références explicites et implicites à l'art de Terpsichore traversent le texte. Ainsi, le but de cet article est de reconsidérer la dernière scène de la pièce à la lumière du masque, divertissement de cour dont la structure fournit un cadre diégétique à cette scène de dénouement. Alors que Shakespeare a pris soin d'aborder l'art chorégraphique uniquement par le langage dans *Love's Labour's Lost*, il convient également de s'interroger sur l'absence

de danse en conclusion de la pièce, « épilogue chorégraphique » symbolique et commun à un certain nombre de comédies, mais dont celle-ci est privée.

This article is first a study of the various uses of the dance in Shakespeare's drama (from its representation on stage to its symbolic value) before reading the last scene of *Love's Labour's Lost* (V.ii) through the prism of the dance. Even though no form of dancing is actually performed on stage in *Love's Labour's Lost*, the art of Terpsichore is referred to on several occasions through numerous explicit or implicit references in the text. So, this article aims at reconsidering the last scene in the play in the perspective of the masque, a court entertainment whose structure serves as a diegetic frame to the winding up of the play. Even though Shakespeare only tackles choreography through language in *Love's Labour's Lost*, it is intriguing to find no dance, no choreographic epilogue as a conclusion to the play while this symbolic moment is common to many other comedies except in this particular one.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés** : danse, intersémiotité, masque, Peines d'amour perdues

**Keywords** : dance, intersemioticity, *Love's Labour's Lost*, masque

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# An Unrehearsed Cue Script Perspective on *Love's Labour's Lost*

Andy Kirtland

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The cue script is an important tool to understanding the working practices and construction of Shakespeare's plays. It is a way to impart pertinent information to actors while enabling them to perform with little to no rehearsal. When examining *Love's Labour's Lost* through a cue script, as one of Shakespeare's actors would have done, influences and directions for the actor's performance emerge. By looking at excerpts from Berowne's cue script, and some possible effects when applying basic rules for staging a performance without group rehearsals, we see how Shakespeare crafts characters and directs his plays using a number of devices including shifting between verse and prose, cue lines, false cues, capitalization and forms of address.

Shakespeare's actors and their contemporaries approached plays differently from their modern counterparts as evidenced in the research of Tiffany Stern in her books *Shakespeare in Parts* and *Rehearsals from Shakespeare to Sheridan*.<sup>1</sup> Actors never received the entire text of a play, but rather absorbed their parts through cue scripts containing only the last few words (or last word) of their cues, the lines they were to speak, entrances, exits and other pertinent stage directions that could not be written into the text.

These cue scripts, or scrolls, consisted of several pages glued or stitched together, and attached at either end to wooden rods. Stern and her uncle Patrick Tucker put their research into practice with his company The Original Shakespeare Company as recorded in Tucker's account of the experience: *The Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*<sup>2</sup>. The Unrehearsed Cue Script Technique explored in this paper is a modern approach based upon the work of Stern and Tucker and evolves from personal experience using cue scripts, assembled from the First Folio, in performance, production and teaching with The New England Shakespeare Festival and my theatre company, The Unrehearsed Shakespeare Project.<sup>3</sup>

According to Stern's research, actors prepared on their own, learning their parts from cue scripts with possible help from book-keepers or stage managers, and possibly a synopsis of the plot and characters. Full group rehearsals were minimal, and most likely a complete run-through of the play did not occur before the opening performance. Under these conditions, pertinent information regarding character, context and blocking would need to be given to the actors within the limited confines of their cue scripts. Clues can be found in cue lines and capitalized words. Transitions are marked by variations in the verse and shifts between verse and prose. The evolution of the text in a scroll often mirrors the journey a character takes on the stage, thus providing a map to guide his performance.

Cue scripts also act as a director by telling the actor how and when he should move. Two basic rules for blocking scenes without rehearsals, expressed in "The Ten Commandments for Staging Unrehearsed Shakespeare" by Demitra Papadinis,<sup>4</sup> Artistic Director of the New England Shakespeare Festival are: Cross to the person to whom you are speaking, if you do not know to whom you are speaking, cross to the person who gave you your cue; and: Action to



the word, taken from Hamlet's famous advice to the players: "Sute the Action to the Word, / the Word to the Action" (*Hamlet*, III.i.9556-7).

There are subtleties to crossing to the person to whom you are speaking. An actor *knows* to whom he is speaking when he explicitly names a character or describes them in a way that makes their identity obvious: using titles such as "Lady" when there is only one female on stage, or "my King." If ambiguity exists as to whom the actor is speaking, he should address and cross to his cue-giver – at least initially. Opportunities may exist to change the focus of the speech. Because the actor is often ignorant of whom he is speaking and crossing to, this device can be deliberately employed by the playwright to trick him into false assumptions for comedic or dramatic purposes, as we will shall see.

The playwright uses personal pronouns to direct the actor as to *how* he should cross. The familiar pronouns "thee," "thou," or "thine" direct a cross toward someone and an invasion of personal space. They can also move conversations from the public to private sphere. "You" and "your" are more formal and they direct a stage cross that leaves space between the characters. They can even direct a cross away. Demonstrative pronouns work the same way: "this" and "these" describe closeness, even touching, while "that" and "those" demand distance. These two rules keep the stage picture constantly moving, and by motivating blocking they prevent a play from becoming a group recitation of 'park and bark' Shakespeare.

Let us begin our cue script perspective by examining Berowne's first few cue lines, without his text, for what they reveal about context and character. Cue lines are more than just prompts for speech. While not belonging to the character, they provide the actor with important information. The length of cue lines in a professional

actor's scroll is a matter of debate, but here we will use three word cues.

.....living in Philosophie.  
.....away from these.  
.....to the rest.  
.....should not know.  
.....god-like recompence.  
.....to vaine delight.  
.....grow the weeding.  
.....How follows that?  
.....In reason nothing.  
.....of the Spring.  
.....home Berowne: adieu.  
.....thee from shame.  
.....Foure dayes ago.  
.....that did I.  
.....shall possibly devise.  
.....was quite forgot.  
.....on mere necessitie.  
.....for my Minstrelsie.

I.i.32-183

“Living in Philosophie,” “away from these,” and “to the rest” depict a philosophic lifestyle away from something, either to some kind of rest or to the rest of something else. Together with “should not know,” “god-like recompence,” and “to vaine delights” these cues describe the play and give clues to Berowne’s character. The Berowne-actor may very well feel “god-like” when looking at his verbose and thick scroll, and his early cues give permission to perform in this manner. The next several cues seem to offer little, but “thee from shame” is suggestive. Whose shame? Is it Berowne’s since he answers the cue, or does he defend someone else? Whatever the actor’s choice in private study, he must prepare to be challenged in public performance.

After each of these cues, Berowne speaks. In Shakespeare, language is an extremely strong indication of character, and the evolution of

language can indicate evolution of character. The text for these cues consist of 108 lines (only six of which are prose), nine speeches ending in rhyming couplets, one speech ending with an *abab* rhyme scheme and only 17 lines of verse fitting into no rhyming pattern. He finishes three couplets started by other characters, expressing close connections between Berowne and the character(s) with whom he rhymes. Rhyming can be a character's conscious choice to be funny, clever, witty, sarcastic, and so on. By choosing to rhyme, Berowne expresses control over his speech and therefore self-control and confidence.

The punctuation in this section also tells the actor that his character is in control of his thoughts. Berowne has only one mid-line stop, a question mark. There are 13 colons, all of which appear at the end of a line. No thought is stopped with a period before the end of a verse line. Using punctuation in this manner, Shakespeare is telling the actor that the character is clear in his thoughts. There is no wavering, no searching for what is to come next. The speaker is confident about what he is saying.

The playwright also marks significant ideas or important character traits with capitalization.

Aside from the beginnings of verse lines, proper names or titles, Berowne's first 108 lines contain the following capitalized words: Ladies, Court, Mistresse(s), Booke(s), Sunne, Godfather(s), Starre, Spring, Summer, Birds, Rose, Snow, Angell, Embassie, Maide, Article, Lawes and Knight. Some of these capitalized words tell the actor how to frame an argument:

At Christmas I no more desire a Rose,  
Then wish a Snow in Mayes new fangled shows:  
But like of each thing that in season growes.  
I.i.110-112

Shakespeare also uses them to draw attention to subtext or double, even triple, entendres. “Mistresse(s)” has connotations of both female masters and lovers. “Court” can be the place of royal governance, a legal court or the act of seduction. A “Knight” is a devoted follower, but of what: the “Lawes” and “Articles,” the “Mistresse(s),” or both? While these words are taken out of context, this was the *only* text given to the actor. Clues and cues must be taken from anywhere the playwright may have left them.

In only three of the speeches in this section does Berowne *know* to whom he is speaking, and therefore to whom he should cross on stage.

.....living in Philosophie.

I can but say their protestation over,  
So much, deare Liege, I have already sworne,  
That is, to live and study heere three yeeres.

I.i.32-35

.....away from these.

Let me say no my Liedge, and if you please,  
I onely swore to study with your grace,  
And stay heere in your Court for three yeeres space.

I.i.49-52

.....shall possibly devise.

This Article my Liedge your selfe must breake,  
For well you know here comes in Embassie  
The French Kings daughter, with your selfe to speake:

I.i.137-141

In each instance Berowne addresses the King and therefore crosses to the King. The assumption can be made that the King gives these cues, since he is being answered, but this may not be the case.

This scene contains ample opportunities for the actor and his scene partners to suit actions to words: “inherit paine,” “To seeke the light of truth,” “please the eye,” “Small have continuall plodders,” “greene geesse are a breeding,” “cause to sing,” “clymbe ore the house to unlock the gate” and “loosing her tongue.” The Berowne-

actor is unaware of other directions found in other cue scripts, and must be constantly engaged and listening for them.

The cue script alerts the actor to a transition occurring sometime around his cue line “Dukes owne person” (I.i.189) by turning from full lines of rhyming verse to short lines of prose.

.....Dukes owne person.  
This fellow, What would'st?  
.....flesh and blood.  
This is he.  
.....the magnificent Armado.  
How low soever the matter, I hope in God for  
high words.  
.....grant us patience.  
To heare, or forbear hearing.  
.....to forbear both.  
Well sir, be it as the stile shall give us cause to  
clime in the merrinesse.  
.....with the manner.  
In what manner?  
.....in some forme.  
For the following sir.  
.....Letter with attention?  
As we would heare an Oracle.  
.....Adriana de Armado.  
This is not so well as I looked for, but the best  
that ever I heard.  
.....so strongly sworne.  
Ile lay my head to any good mans hat,  
These oathes and lawes will prove an idle scorne.  
Sirra, come on.  
.....sit downe sorrow.  
EXIT  
I.i.189-305

However, it leaves him ignorant of the reason for this change. From the unknown event until his first exit, Berowne has nine speeches, eight of which are in prose and are only one sentence long; his only three verse lines are monosyllabic but for three words. His forms of

address are also ambiguous, except for his last line, “Sirra,” addressed to someone of lower class or rank, or to someone he treats as such.

From the full text we know Berowne’s speech is affected by the entrance of Constable Dull and the clown, Costard. One exchange between Berowne and Costard illustrates a possible cause for this change in Berowne:

CLOWNE. The matter is to me sir, as concerning Jaquenetta. | The manner of it is, I was taken with the manner.

BEROWNE. In what manner?

CLOWNE. In manner and forme following sire, all those three. | I was seene with her in the Mannor house, sitting with | her upon the Forme, and taken following her into the | Parke: which put together, is in manner and forme | following. Now sir for the manner; It is the manner | of a man to speake to a woman, for the forme in some forme.

BEROWNE. For the following sir.

I.i.208-218

Depending on the length of cues given to professional actors (one to three words), Costard gives Berowne several false cues to speak. A false cue occurs when an actor hears his cue to speak, but the cue he hears does not end the preceding speech. If only one word cues are given, then Berowne’s cue “manner” is spoken twice; his next, “forme,” is given *five* times. Because these are the last words in his speeches, the Costard-actor knows that he is giving false cues and will continue speaking, but the Berowne-actor will not know he receives false cues until the performance. The result for the audience is that Berowne tries to hurry Costard’s explanation along, but the clown rides over his interruptions. No longer the center of attention, Berowne’s own speech becomes terse, short and clipped.

When Berowne returns in the second act, he has not recovered the exuberance with which he began the play. The playwright deliberately keeps the actor and the character off-balance. To

illustrate how Shakespeare can intentionally mislead his actors for dramatic purposes we will examine the full text of his first interaction with Rosaline.

NAVARRE. Madam, I will, if sodainly I may.

PRINCESSE. You will the sooner that I were away,  
For you'll prove perjurd if you make me stay.

BEROWNE. Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?

ROSALINE. Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?

BEROWNE. I know you did.

II.i.113-118

Berowne crosses to and addresses the actor who cues him with “make me stay.” His question “Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?” is assumed (by many who have read the play) to be the moment he (re)connects with Rosaline, with whom he shortly falls in love. However, by following the rules mentioned earlier, Berowne addresses the *Princess*. The Princess cannot speak to this intrusion, not being cued, but upon hearing her cue Rosaline crosses to Berowne and repeats the question that then starts the rest of their exchange.

If the actors cross to the person to whom they are speaking, the audience experiences Berowne mistaking the identity of one woman, only to discover the lady he thinks he is talking to is there unnoticed by him (a mistake he will repeat in Act v, disguised as a Russian). The playwright marks this entire exchange all sides with the formal pronoun “you.” This is an open conversation, not private or intimate in any way. Everyone on stage and in the audience witnesses this mistake. Is this a momentous revelation that Berowne may be the kind of man who forgets the women he has danced with? Hardly, and it does not change any major themes of the play. It immediately illustrates Berowne’s immaturity and Rosaline’s straightforwardness.

In this moment, the actor is unaware that he is talking to the wrong woman. He is put in the same embarrassing situation as his character. This happens often for an actor when approaching a play from the perspective of a cue script. The playwright creates moments in such a way that his performers do not have to worry about pretense. His characters and actors make their discoveries at the same time. It is possible that the original actor was made aware with whom Berowne had danced. However, given the mechanics of cue scripts, the playwright probably crafted this *faux pas*. By having Berowne talk to the wrong woman the first time he speaks to a woman, Shakespeare reinforces the character's lack of ability to fruitfully communicate with the opposite sex as is illustrated in the rest of the exchange:

.....ask the question?  
You must not be so quicke.  
.....with such questions.  
Your wit's too hot, it speeds too fast, 'twill tire.  
.....in the mire.  
What time a day?  
.....fooles should aske.  
Now faire befall your maske.  
.....face it covers.  
And send you many lovers.  
.....you be none.  
Nay then will I be gone.  
..... from long living.  
I cannot stay thanks-giving.  
II.i.119-127

These seven lines, six of which are short verse lines, contain only five polysyllabic words. He finishes four couplets, but lacks confidence, energy and eloquence. This becomes a theme for Berowne: when talking to women, his rhymes are forced or internal. His struggle to speak to women is his struggle to have relationships with them.



After this first exchange with Rosaline, Berowne is no longer himself. His following 64 lines of text contain two entrances, an exit, at least two shifts into prose and 13 short lines of verse. He only rhymes one couplet and shares none. He loses his self-control as he loses control of his verse. The cue script offers a reason for the variance of the character.

.....print: gardon, remuneration.  
O, and I forsooth in love,  
I that have beene loves whip?  
III.i.164-166

This is the first time Berowne mentions being in love, and his cue for these lines is: “remuneration,” i.e. payment. The actor knows that he speaks of his love for Rosaline because he has given Costard a letter to deliver to her. However, his description of Rosaline is not flattering, and he ends with a couplet announcing, “Some men must love my Lady, and some Jone” (III.i.197); Jone being a “designation of a peasant girl.”<sup>5</sup> He must pay for being in love, for breaking his bachelor vows “to love the worst of all” (187).

As another surprise for the actor, “remuneration” is again a false cue given by Costard. Love is an obstacle to Berowne’s self-image, and the playwright gives the actor an obstacle to overcome in his confession.

Berowne’s metamorphosis from happy bachelor to a slave of love is fully manifest in his next entrance when he delivers his longest block of prose:

.....to our recreation.  
ENTER BEROWNE WITH A PAPER IN HIS HAND, ALONE  
The King he is hunting the Deare, I am coursing my selfe. They have pitcht a Toyle, I am toying in a pytch, pitch that defiles; defile, a foule word: Well, set thee downe sorrow; for so they say the foole said, and so say I, and I the foole: Well proved wit. By the Lord this Love is as mad as Ajax, it kills sheepe, it kills mee, I a sheepe: Well proved againe a my side. I will not love;

if I do hang me: yfaith I will not. O but her eye: by this light, but for her eye,  
I would not love her; yes, for her two eyes. Well, I doe nothing in the world  
but lye, and lye in my throate. By heaven I doe love, and it hath taught mee  
to Rime, and to be mallicholie: and here is part of my Rime, and heere my  
mallicholie. Well, she hath one a'my Sonnets already, the Clowne bore it,  
the Foole sent it, and the Lady hath it: sweet Clowne, sweeter Foole,  
sweetest Lady. By the world, I would not care a pin, if the other three were  
in. Here comes one with a paper, God give him grace to grone.

IV.iii.351-371

The capital words here sum up his situation neatly: “Deare,” “Toyle,”  
“Love,” “Rime,” “Sonnets,” “Clowne,” “Foole,” and “Lady.” A stage  
direction tells us that Berowne enters “with a paper in his hand”  
(the only prop mentioned in Berowne’s stage directions) and he is  
“alone.” By setting these pieces of information in a stage direction  
the playwright imparts them with a particular significance. The  
paper will be of importance in this scene. This is the first time the  
playwright wants the actor to *know* he is *solus*, and he is directing the  
actor to prepare this speech as such.

“I would not care a pin, if the other three were in” (IV.iii.369-370), he  
declares at the end of his speech, and true to these words, upon  
discovering Navarre, Dumaine and Longaville are also enamored  
with their own ladies, Berowne recovers his control from the  
beginning of the play.

Now step I forth to whip hypocrisie.  
Ah good my Liedge, I pray thee pardon me.  
Good heart, What grace hast thou thus to reprove  
These wormes for loving, that art most in love? [...]  
Where lies thy griefe? O tell me good Dumaine;  
And gentle Longavill, where lies thy paine?  
And where my Liedges? all about the brest:  
A Candle hoa!

IV.iii.503-526

He chastises his friends with 23 full lines of regular pentameter, all  
rhyming couplets except the last line and a half. He is clearly talking

to (at least) the King, Dumaine and Longaville, crossing to them as he does so. There are many cues to action in these lines: “teares,” “Minstrels,” “asham’d,” “foll’ry,” “sighes,” “grones,” “transformed to a Gnat,” “whipping a Gigge,” “lies thy griefe,” “lies thy paine.” He relishes that he has company as a lovesick fool in this joyous, physical speech.

In Act V, the men disguise themselves as Russians to woo their ladies. This scheme fails when the ladies, forewarned of this Russian ruse, disguise themselves and dupe the men into confessing their feelings to the wrong women (Berowne’s second *faux pas*). After having their masked advances repulsed, the men return as themselves only to be confronted with their failure, and Berowne’s cue script directs another conversion.

..... comming from Muscovie.  
Thus poure the stars down plagues for perjury.  
Can any face of brasse hold longer out?  
Heere stand I, Ladie dart thy skill at me,  
Bruise me with scorne, confound me with a flout.  
Thrust thy sharpe wit quite through my ignorance.  
Cut me to peeces with thy keene conceit:  
And I will wish thee never more to dance,  
Nor never more in Russian habit waite. [...]  
And to begin Wench, so God helpe me law,  
My love to thee is sound, sans cracke or flaw.  
V.ii.576-598

He finally rhymes to a woman (“Heere stand I, Ladie”) in a mature, easily fluid fashion that until now eluded his conversations with the fairer sex. The confidence and maturity of Berowne’s language marks his confidence and maturity. There is neither the flowery pomposity of his earlier tirades to his mates, nor the wild hyperboles of his tormented passion. The playwright even employs the pronouns “thee” and “thy” to create a private, intimate moment away from the others on stage. Berowne invades the personal space

of the woman to whom he speaks, and even touches “this white glove.”

The Berowne-actor knows he is speaking to a woman, and he knows he is speaking about his love for her, but it is unclear to *which* woman he is speaking. It is clear that earlier Berowne wrote a letter to Rosaline, and he has professed and defended his love for Rosaline, but there is never evidence in his cue script that he ever speaks to Rosaline. He never says “you, Rosaline.” The actor can assume that this is the case, and he will discover if he is correct, but he already has been wrong twice.

.....griefes are double.

Honest plain words, best pierce the ears of grieffe  
And by these badges understand the King,  
For your faire sakes have we neglected time,  
Plaid foule play with our oaths: your beautie Ladies  
Hath much deformed us, fashioning our humors  
Even to the opposed end of our intents. [...]  
And even that falshood in it selfe a sinne,  
Thus purifies it selfe, and turnes to grace.

.....in thy brest.

And what to me my Love? and what to me?

.....are so yong.

Studies my Ladie? Mistresse, looke on me,  
Behold the window of my heart, mine eie:  
What humble suite attends thy answer there,  
Impose some service on me for my love.

.....impotent to smile.

To move wilde laughter in the throate of death?

It cannot be, it is impossible.

Mirth cannot move a soule in agonie.

.....of your reformation.

A twelvemonth? Well: befall what will befall,

Ile jest a twelvemonth in an Hospitall.

.....on your way.

Our woing doth not end like an old Play:

Jack hath not Gil: these Ladies courtesies

Might wel have made our sport a Comedie.

..... then 'twil end.  
That's too long for a play.  
V.ii.952-1082

In Berowne's final cue lines the playwright directs an unsuspected modulation in tone and circumstance: "griefes are double," "in thy brest," "are so yong," "impotent to smile," "of your reformation," "on your way" and "then 'twil end." A role that began with a verbal bang fizzles out at its conclusion with none of Berowne's recently recovered energy and eloquence.

There is also a change in punctuation from Berowne's first appearance on stage. In this section there are three colons occurring mid-line, denoting a shift in the character's thought without ending it. The character is unsure of what he will say next. Three question marks also appear mid-line, each ending a thought. Since they come in the middle of a line, that line is completed by a new thought following quickly on the last. The build-up in momentum here is in the shifts made by the character. This is a significant departure from Berowne's first 108 lines of text where the momentum is derived from driving to the end of a well thought-out idea. Now Berowne is off his guard.

The audience and readers know that the death of the Princess' father has just been announced. This is the first real peril to enter the world of Navarre. The princess and her train must abandon their suitors and return home, leaving instructions for the men on how they can truly prove their love. The Berowne-actor is ignorant of this, again discovering this in tandem with his character.

Often clues to a character's end appear throughout his cue script, and in the Berowne-actor's scroll there is no indication of a wedding. Revisiting Berowne's cues from Act I, scene I, it is interesting to note that his cues begin with "living in Philosophy" and end with "sit

downe sorrow.” As earlier stated, the Berowne-actor never *knows* whether or not he ever speaks to Rosaline, so there is no expectation in his text that the two will end up together. While unforeseen, Berowne’s deflated conclusion is in many ways seeded throughout his cue script by the playwright.

This small tool, the cue script, holds a vast store of shorthand information for actors and can enable troupes of performers to produce entire plays with little to no group preparation. By eliminating information that is not directly pertinent to an actor’s independent study of a role, Shakespeare made it possible to produce complex, subtle and entertaining characters while constructing surprising, dramatic situations that both performers and audience discover in the moment of creation. By looking at these texts from the point of view of an actor and his scroll, we can see Shakespeare as a master craftsman, a *playwright* who forged entire productions from his pen.

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## NOTES

1. See Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts*, Oxford, OUP, 2000 and Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, Oxford, OUP, 2007.
2. See Patrick Tucker, *The Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach*, New York, Routledge, 2002.
3. All quotations, lineation and attributions from the works of William Shakespeare in this paper are taken from *The Applause First Folio of Shakespeare in Modern Type*, prepared and annotated by Neil Freeman, New York and London, Applause Books, 2001. From research done by Tucker, Stern, Papadinis, Freeman and others, and my own practical experience performing, teaching and producing, I believe that the First Folio of 1623 is the closest manuscript that we have to what Shakespeare’s actors would have used in performance.

Later editions have been edited for a reading audience, and in doing so, clues such as capitalization, lineation and punctuation have been altered in ways that obscure the directions that were meant for actors who used the text for performances.

4. For a closer look into how Ms. Papadinis approaches the First Folio scripts for performance, see her introductions and annotations to her Frankly Annotated First Folio editions of *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It* and *Macbeth*, available from MacFarland publishing.

5. Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary, Vol 1.*, New York, Dover, 1971, p. 604.

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## ABSTRACTS

Based on how Shakespeare's actors would approach the text, through cue scripts, the Unrehearsed Cue Script Technique is a key to unlock the playwright's directions written into the text. By looking at some excerpts from Berowne's cue script we will see how Shakespeare was able to craft plays in such a way that his actors would be able to perform them with little to no group rehearsal.

Fondée sur la façon dont les acteurs de la troupe de Shakespeare abordaient le texte, à travers la seule connaissance de leur propre rôle, la technique du *Unrehearsed Cue Script* est une approche qui permet de révéler les indications scéniques introduites par le dramaturge dans le texte même. A partir d'extraits du rôle de Berowne, nous allons voir comment Shakespeare réussit à écrire des pièces que ses acteurs pouvaient jouer quasiment sans répétition avec la troupe au complet.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** script, représentation, répétition, acteur

**Keywords:** cue script, rehearsal, Love's Labour's Lost, actor

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# Love's Labour's Music: the song-contest of the cuckoo and the owl

Chantal Schütz

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In her introduction to *Love's Labour's Lost* in the Riverside edition, Anne Barton states that “As though conscious of the fact that in this resolution the arts of language have been subjected to an unfriendly scrutiny, Shakespeare allows them a restitution in the final song” – a song which “in a sense [she claims] recapitulates the entire development of the comedy.” Barton emphasizes the balance and harmony that the songs embody, bringing together as they do the charms and harsher realities of each season, both of nature and of human life. The symmetries built into the songs reflect those of the play, with its balanced pairs of lovers and of fantastics. Considering the two songs as a single entity, she posits that it “presents a wholeness of outlook in which fact and fancy, youth and age, life and death are held in equilibrium.” Yet she tellingly concludes that although “the unifying effect of the music must not be underestimated, [...] still the harmony is essentially verbal”.<sup>1</sup> The music performed during the play thus seems less relevant than the concept of dance as a potentially structuring metaphor. While the play relies heavily on a dialectic opposing words and music, it ultimately seems to challenge the Orphic power of music as much as that of words, be it through its opposition of verbal harmony to

minstrelsy, through the types of song it showcases, the dances it alludes to, the mythological associations it evokes and the musical metaphors it plays on.

### Verbal harmony versus minstrelsy

Barton's lines reflect the very crux posed by this play, of which the poet and librettist W.H. Auden stated that it was the most apt of the canon to be used as a basis for an opera: “*Love's Labour's Lost* is the only Shakespeare play that will do as an opera. It is structured like an opera and so much of it is already in rhymed verse.”<sup>2</sup> It is a play that has been continually praised for its musical language – and yet it contains fewer references to music or diegetic songs than many other of Shakespeare's plays. The difficulty is perhaps most clearly encapsulated in the first reference to Armado made by the King, very early on in the play:

KING. One who the music of his own vain tongue  
Doth ravish like enchanting harmony;  
A man of complements, whom right and wrong  
Have chose as umpire of their mutiny:  
[...]  
But, I protest, I love to hear him lie  
And I will use him for my minstrelsy.  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, I .i.164-7; 173-4

Minstrelsy: this is also the very insult used by Berowne to deride his fellow-students for writing love poetry: “Tush, none but minstrels like of sonneting!” ( IV .iii.150). Hence, the play presents itself from the outset as an open contest between spoken rhetoric and actual music, since Armado's elaborate speech is reckoned “musical” enough to provide “minstrelsy” to the court, but we are immediately warned that this music is a lie – albeit an entertaining one.

However, the King is deceived, for Armado himself needs Moth, the word incarnate, to provide music to soothe his own *ennui*, requiring

the child to “Warble” in order to “make passionate [his] sense of hearing” ( III .i.1). In addition, the obviously derogatory formulation of the King’s statement suggests that the simile favours music over language, for Armado as speaker is perceived a mere minstrel. In other words, little better than a vagabond and beggar. While it is well known that rogues and actors were equated in both legal and moral early modern discourse, it should also be noted that the legal statutes published in 1572 and 1598 identified travelling musicians as vagrants too, although there had been some discussion in Parliament as to whether they should be included in the list. One result of the publication of the 1572 statute was that the term “minstrel”, which had been quite neutral until then, became derogatory, and was quickly dropped by most music-makers and employers. <sup>3</sup>

Part of the derogatory associations of the word minstrel derives from the old-European distinction between “three types of individuals versed in the art of music: one is the person who plays an instrument; another that composes songs; and the third is the individual who evaluates the work of the performer and the songs. But those who are in the instrumental class and spend all their time there — [...] these are excluded from the knowledge of the science of music and made servants, as said, devoid of all reason and destitute of all speculative thinking.” <sup>4</sup> These are the words of Boethius, the early 6<sup>th</sup> century philosopher whose *De Institutione Musica* , a compilation of surviving Greek musical theory, was the standard “textbook” for the study of music in most European universities throughout the Middle ages and the Renaissance. As such, although it is not explicitly stated, the King and his fellow-students would have included the study of Music, one of the liberal arts, in their

three years at the Academe, just as students at Oxford would have done.

### Harmony and song

At the heart of the Boethian theory of music we find the reliance of *musica instrumentalis* on timeless harmony – the mathematical relations that make it possible to talk or write about music without ever practising it, and that instituted or justified the hierarchy between the *musicus*, the scholar, the *cantor*, the performer (commonly referred to in England as “minstrel” or “songster”), and the *compositor*, the one who commits music to paper. Closely linked to the doctrine of sympathy, Boethian theory involves the idea that the concord of several sounds or parts results in harmony, an audible harmony which reflects the perfection of the motion of the stars. Boethius describes three types of music: the unheard music of the spheres or celestial harmony (*musica mundana*); the music that unites the body and soul in a harmonious whole (*musica humana*); and “empirical” music, whether produced by instruments or voices (*musica instrumentalis, musica vocalis*). Shakespeare, like many other writers of his time, integrates these theories into his poetic writing, most famously in *The Merchant of Venice*:

LORENZO. Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.  
*The Merchant of Venice*, v .v.63-5.

The long and short of it is that humans supposedly cannot hear the music of the spheres, although many critics contend that these ideas were beginning to be called into question by the rise of scientific thought. Be it as it may, the convention that governs much of the references to music on stage, in poetry and in the visual arts is that the concord of sounds or instruments mirrors the harmony of love

or friendship, or that of peace and amity. Calling Armado or the courtiers as writers of sonnets “minstrels” implies that they master neither the arcane theories of *musica mundana* , nor the balance of *musica humana*, that they are in effect “destitute of speculative thinking”. But having the ridiculous Holofernes “evaluate the work of the performer and the songs” would tend to discredit the role of the *musicus* at least as much as that of the *cantor* or *compositor* .

In the last decade of the sixteenth century, music was increasingly perceived not as a rival art but as a companion to poetry and drama, and the discussions about the marriage of words and music were at their keenest in Florence and other Italian cities, among learned academies of the kind the King of Navarre attempts to create in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* . These debates eventually led to the birth of opera around 1600, with two works whose protagonist was Orpheus, the mythical Greek poet who embodied the miraculous power of music to heal, to ravish and to vanquish death. That the boundaries between the two arts are unclear is exemplified in the lexical choices of Holofernes when he analyzes Berowne’s sonnet:

NATHANIEL [ *reading* ]. Thy eye Jove’s lightning bears, thy voice his dreadful  
thunder,  
Which not to anger bent, is music and sweet fire.  
Celestial as thou art, O, pardon, love, this wrong,  
That sings heaven’s praise with such an earthly tongue.  
HOLOFERNES . You find not the apostrophus, and so miss the accent. Let me  
supervise the canzonet. Here are only numbers ratified, but for the  
elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy, *caret* .  
(iv.ii.103-10)

Holofernes refers to the poem as a “canzonet”, in other words a musical piece, one such as the three-part songs published by Thomas Morley in 1593, the last song of which may be referred to when the King asks Berowne “Whither away so fast?” ( iv .iii.178 <sup>5</sup> ) . Holofernes also refers to a “staff” <sup>6</sup> in the poem (in line 92), then to

the “accent”, making a clear connection with singing notes (which he does at line 88) and the musical imagery in the sonnet. He criticizes Nathaniel’s diction and delivery and the fact he has not respected the metre, using the word “cadence” in the sense of rhythmical measure, but implying that the word could be understood in its musical meaning, ie the falling pattern at the end of a musical phrase or piece. Thus, as Christopher Wilson underlines it, although Holofernes is in fact critiquing the work as a Petrarchan “canzone”, the presence of other musical words (accent, numbers, fancy) point to a conscious overlaying of music and poetry into a joint ideal. <sup>7</sup>

The King of Navarre’s academy, however, fails in the end to create anything but fairly rustic songs, whose texts have presumably been written by the pedant Holofernes and/or the braggart Armado, for which no tune is provided and of which we are not told who is expected to perform them. As a result, directors have been known to assign them indifferently to Moth and Jaquenetta, or Holofernes and Nathaniel, or Dull and Costard; to have them spoken rather than sung; to have new music written to them – or to reuse well known ballad tunes, as was the custom at the time. <sup>8</sup> This is the suggestion made by Ross Duffin in his book of *Shakespeare songs*, where he sets both ditties to the tune of a well-known ballad called *Packington’s Pound*, claiming that its chorus easily accommodates the “cuckoo” and “To whit-Tu whoo” calls. <sup>9</sup> Duffin proposes to use the same tune for at least two other songs in the Shakespeare canon, so it is safe to assume that other tunes may have fitted just as well.

It is impossible to tell whether music was specially commissioned for *Love’s Labour’s Lost* as it may have been for *The Tempest* or *Twelfth Night*, since there are no traces of the songs under the titles “When Daisies Pied” or “When Icicles Hang by the Wall”, either in printed

volumes or manuscripts of the time. However this is not an uncommon situation for songs, as Tiffany Stern has discussed at length , since they were often disconnected from the playhouse book, either because they were given to a composer so that he could set the words to music, or to a performer so that he could learn the piece. <sup>10</sup> This is the case, for instance, of Desdemona's *Willow Song* , which is present in the First Folio but not in the Quarto of *Othello*, although the situation is quite different since there are many available versions of the song outside the playbook.

Even more mysterious than the closing songs of *Ver* and *Hiems* is the song Armado requests Moth to sing in act III scene 1, which is simply denoted as “*Concolinel* ”. Although some editors have suggested that this foreign-sounding title refers either to an Irish ballad or a French ditty, it is difficult to determine whether Shakespeare intended the line “sweet air” pronounced by Armado in response to the song as a joke or a serious appreciation. If the song were meant to be perceived as genuinely sweet, as a “food of love”, then Moth should probably sing a lute-song like the ones that were becoming fashionable in the late 1590s following the publication of John Dowland's *First Book of Ayres* in 1597. According to Thomas Campion, a prolific author of such songs, “Short Ayres, if they be skilfully framed, and naturally exprest, are like quick good Epigrammes in Poesie, many of them shewing as much artifice, and breeding as great difficultie, as a larger Poeme”. <sup>11</sup> There was considerable demand for such musical material and Dowland's book was reprinted several times, so it is quite possible that the company performing *Love's Labour's Lost* , which must have employed at least five boys to play the parts of Moth and the four ladies, had some skilled musicians available to perform such a song. If, on the contrary, Armado is portrayed as a purely ridiculous character, he may well be

tricked into admiring a song that has no Orphic value. Thus, choosing a humorous song can inflect the meaning in a very different way from the indisputably melancholy songs used in *Twelfth Night* or *Measure for Measure*. This was the case at Shakespeare's Globe in the 2009 production, where Moth sang one verse from Clément Janequin's *Chant des Oiseaux* in French, making sure the audience understood the onomatopoeic punning on the cuckoo's name (a homonym of cuckold):

Arrière, maistre coqu,  
Chacun vous est mal tenu,  
Car vous n'estes qu'un traistre.  
Coqu, coqu, coqu, coqu. <sup>12</sup>

Since Shakespeare employs 'air' whether he means the song type or simply a tune, relying on other occurrences in the canon is not helpful. According to Christopher Wilson, "the description 'sweet' is commonly used to imply a pleasant pretty air." Yet there is particular relevance in the context of the French court, since he mentions that "English music was described as 'sweet' notably by French writers, because of the concordant sound of its thirds and sixths in contrast to the more open harsher fourths and fifths of continental polyphony" – typically the intervals exemplified in Janequin's mimetic music <sup>13</sup> .

Armado is, of course, presented as a caricature of the melancholy lover, since the object of his attentions is a promiscuous dairy-maid. But his melancholic state may have been classified as scholarly, a condition said to be brought about by sedentary life allied to excessive and solitary intellectual activity, that caused mental fixation, led to anxiety and sometimes ended in madness. <sup>14</sup> In *As You like It*, Shakespeare's malcontent Jaques states that the scholar's melancholy "is emulation" and opposes it to that of the musician,



“which is fantastical” or the courtier’s “which is proud” ( IV .i.10-11), as though he were critiquing the different characters in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* . The ability of music to cure sadness and grief was a commonplace both of treatises on melancholy and on music, but there was also a great deal of writing devoted to the risk that music might on the contrary generate or entertain an unhealthy melancholy. In the *Anatomy of Melancholy* , for instance, Burton states that music “hath diverse effects: and Theophrastus right well prophecied that diseases were either procured by Musicke, or mitigated”. <sup>15</sup> The ambivalence of Armado’s exclamation after Moth has sung is therefore congruent with the contradictory discourses on the reciprocal effects of music and melancholy upon one another.

#### Dance

However, the many confusions in the play would seem to suggest that the humorous interpretation is the correct one. For instance, Armado does not understand that Moth is referring to a dance when he mentions a “French brawl” (I.6) in the same scene (though this may be a topical allusion to riots that had taken place in London in 1593 against the French Huguenot refugees, who were accused of usurping housing and employment <sup>16</sup> ). And Moth proceeds to describe the best way of wooing Jaquenetta in a string of musical puns that underline the Spaniard’s ineptitude (the words “compliments” and “men of note” both have secondary musical meanings), culminating with the allusion to the song of the Hobby-horse. Thus the tune Armado sings should not be too “long” (the name of a type of note) to gain Jaquenetta’s love, implying that it should not be a lengthy mournful ballad. Armado should alternate different expressive vocal techniques like sighing and singing, singing through the chest or the nose, which implies a constant

variety in vocal techniques (and displays competent appreciation of the different means available to singers). Above all, he should resort to different types of dance, including the lively canary, a Spanish dance commonly associated with licentiousness, which Thoinot Arbeau describes in his *Orchesography* as gay but strange, fantastic and barbaric: “notterez que lesdits passages sont gaillards, & neantmoins estranges, bizarres, & qui resentent fort le sauvage”.<sup>17</sup> The Morris Dance, or Morisque, suggested by the Hobby-Horse, is presumably another dance he might employ in his courtship as an alternative to the Brawl, one of the most common dances of the time.

That quaintness and licentiousness are the most frequent associations of music in *Love's Labour's Lost* is also apparent from the choice of the Muscovites and their attendant musical Blackamoors as a ploy to court the ladies. According to Thoinot Arbeau, this is the very origin of the Canarie: “elle a pris source d'un ballet composé pour une mascarade, ou les danseurs estoient habillez en Roys & Roynes de Mauritanie, ou bien en forme de Sauvages, avec plumaches teintes de diverses couleurs.”<sup>18</sup>

### Orpheus and Apollo

Both the failure of the Muscovites to bring the ladies to dance and the musical conclusion of the play would seem to point in the direction of a collapse in the Orphic power of music to achieve harmony and accomplish miraculous recoveries. Armado's closing line, opposing the harsh words of Mercury to the songs of Apollo, actually structures the play in more pragmatic ways than is usually assumed. It has as much to do with Elizabethan theories of music and the bringing into question of the very essence of the play as with the practicalities of performers' lives. In the background of the play, it is in fact the contest between Apollo and Pan and/or Marsyas that is

constantly lurking. According to Christopher Wilson, the symbolic meaning of the God of music, poetry and eloquence's contest is "essential to Elizabethan mythography, representing in the quiet string music of Apollo, order, sobriety and control in contrast to the less refined wind music of Pan, which symbolizes disorder, lust and strife." <sup>19</sup> Yet this frequently depicted Ovidian episode belies the gentleness of Apollo's songs, focusing as it does on the savagery with which the god punished his competitor, whom he flayed alive for having dared to challenge the superiority of his art. The violence of the criticism aimed by the courtiers at the fantastics during the masque of the Nine Worthies is certainly an echo of this scene, while the touching protestations of Holofernes and Armado, the counterparts of Midas and his ass's ears, are a reflection of the increasingly precarious status of performers.

Thus it is possible to say that, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, the Orphic power of music is called into question as much as that of words: its theoretical power to ravish is never demonstrated. In fact, it is never really given a chance: when Moth is first asked to sing, he does not oblige – perhaps because music being associated with love and courtship, it would be inappropriate as long as women are not admitted to the court. <sup>20</sup> When he does sing, the only thing he achieves is the setting free of Costard, which smacks of the anticlimactic if one remembers that Orpheus's achievement is to convince Hades to free Eurydice from the realm of the dead. When Rosaline poses as the princess ( v .ii.211) and calls for music, she immediately dismisses it and never allows it to resume. And the main musical allusions are to popular ballads that lack the poignancy of the *Willow Song*, viz. the song of *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid*, obviously a "hit" of the period, and a personal favourite of Shakespeare's, since he cites it in five different plays. It is a

lengthy ballad of an African king who inexplicably falls in love at first sight with “a beggar all in gray” although “From nature’s laws he did decline” – a perfect precedent for the King of Navarre and his courtiers. <sup>21</sup>

### Musical metaphors

This challenge to the conventional belief in Orphic supernatural powers may have something to do with the ongoing debates about the legitimacy of practising music. Because of its commonplace association with love, both platonic and erotic, even within the courtly conduct books, members of the nobility were advised to abstain from it in public or at least in front of their inferiors, and above all to leave it to the young. According to the Earl of Northumberland, music was “but lost labour”, no better than playing dice or cards. <sup>22</sup> Elizabethan attitudes to musical practice reveal an open contradiction, with one side advocating music as part of the gentlemanly ideal set out by Baldassare Castiglione or Henry Peacham, and a counter-discourse that warned against its effeminizing and even corrupting effects. While some, like Philip Stubbes, inveighed against music as a symptom of moral depravation and advised “[I]f you would have your daughter whoorish bawdie, and uncleane, and a filthie speaker, and such like, bring her up in musick”, <sup>23</sup> the practise of music by young people of aristocracy and gentry seems to have been quite widespread, for their own recreation but also in the case of women as one of the desirable accomplishments of the ideal lady and a means of feminine appeal. Thus it is not surprising to see Rosaline and Boyet spar in musical terms to the tune of another lost song, “Thou canst not hit it, my good man” – although Rosaline may well be reckoned a “filthie speaker” here if she is using an innocent children’s song with bawdy intent. <sup>24</sup> Nor is it surprising to hear Berowne make fun of Boyet’s

allegedly deficient musical skills: when he claims that “He can sing / A mean most meanly” ( v .ii.327-8), he is insinuating that the courtier is not as good as reading music as he should be (the mean is the middle part in a part-song, as opposed to the treble, which usually carries the tune). What in fact Berowne is suggesting is that Boyet is adept at creating discord – be it by revealing the real identity of the Muscovites or by putting Moth out with his unmusical interruptions. In effect, he does what Iago proposes to do: “Oh, you are well tuned now, / But I’ll set down the pegs that make this music” ( *Othello* , II .i.200-1). The erroneous singing of the gamut by Holofernes (“ut, re, sol, la, mi, fa”, IV .ii.88, instead of “ut, re, mi, fa sol, la”) also points to this preposterous untuning, a musical reflection of the unnatural exclusion of women which undermines the chances of success of *Musica Humana*, the Boethian promise of balance that Rosaline invokes and mocks when she quibbles at length on the “measures” that the Muscovites claim to have walked ( v .ii.184-198): a measure is both a stately dance, the distance covered by the revellers and the golden mean, but the word “tread” carries a bawdy connotation which is very often found in connection with dance.

Shakespeare is adept at using metaphors and puns that spring from the polysemic terminology of music: words like measure, division, complements, air, tongues, base, or warbling all refer simultaneously to musical and physical substrates. And musical instruments are made of wood, metal, skin, frets, leather, gut, allowing for anthropomorphic or zoomorphic readings. Thus *Love’s Labour’s Lost* includes both a grotesque comparison of Holofernes’s face with a cittern-head, <sup>25</sup> and its counterpart in the form of the metaphorical stringing of Apollo’s lute with his own hair: love is “as sweet and musical / As bright Apollo’s lute, strung with his hair” ( IV .iii.311-2). This is an extravagant conceit typical of Berowne’s mock-

Petrarchan imagery, but Shakespeare does elsewhere use similar images to praise the power of music:

PROTEUS. For Orpheus' lute was strung with poets' sinews,  
Whose golden touch could soften steel and stones,  
Make tigers tame and huge leviathans  
Forsake unsounded deeps to dance on sands.  
After your dire-lamenting elegies,  
Visit by night your lady's chamber-window  
With some sweet concert; to their instruments  
Tune a deploring dump: the night's dead silence  
Will well become such sweet-complaining grievance.  
*The Two Gentleman of Verona*, III .ii.78-86

One could however state that the authority of these lines is equally undermined by Proteus' lack of faith. The very use of the lute as a cause of the gods' "drowsy harmony" is ambivalent, since the instrument is associated as much with the aerial strains of Apollonian concord as with the world of courtesans and taverns.

As a conclusion, I would like to put forward the idea that the music of *Love's Labour's Lost* resides as much in its words and structure as in the imagery and insertion of musical episodes. It is a play built on the principle of "sweet division" – a practice consisting in "breaking up long notes into much shorter florid movement".<sup>26</sup> This is a metaphor Shakespeare was fond of, as in Juliet's parting words to Romeo:

It is the lark that sings so out of tune,  
Straining harsh discords and unpleasing sharps.  
Some say the lark makes sweet division  
This doth not so, for she divideth us.  
*Romeo and Juliet*, III .v.27-30

*Love's Labour's Lost* unfolds very much like a musical piece of this kind, stating its themes, which are then repeated with embellishments, as when each of the ladies describes her meeting with her suitor, or when quibbles are pursued cue after cue in act V.

And in the end the lovers are in fact divided, to the tune of the songs of Ver and Hiems – which would presumably be performed with such variations, for fear of becoming too repetitive. Music and words are indeed put in each other's service from beginning to end as the play repeatedly baffles our expectations and develops its verbal virtuosity.

## Appendix

The sheer musicality of the structure and the built-in symmetries of *Love's Labour's Lost* inspired two operas – yet the lack of success of both of them seems a melancholy extension of the absence of harmony at the end of the play. A 20<sup>th</sup> century version based on a libretto by Auden, with music by the Russian composer Nicolas Nabokov has never been revived since its first performances in the 1970s. And a French adaptation by the noted composer Leo Delibes and expert librettists Barbier and Carré failed because it made the unreasonable wager of fitting the 18 characters of the play to Mozart's 6 person opera *Così fan Tutte*. Though the English correspondent in Paris in 1863 was relatively benign in his appraisal, the scathing reviews of P. Scudo in the *Revue Musicale* and of Joseph d'Ortigue in the *Journal des Débats* made sure the adaptation was never reprised, although the association of the play with the playful worlds of both *Così fan Tutte* and *The Marriage of Figaro* has endured.

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## NOTES

1. Anne Barton, Introduction, *Love's Labor's Lost*, The Riverside Shakespeare, General and textual ed., G. Blakemore Evans, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin, 1997, p. 211.

2. Quoted by Vincent Giroud, *Nicolas Nabokov: A Life in Freedom and Music*, Oxford, O UP, 2015, p. 393.
3. Cf. Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England*, Cambridge, CUP, 2013, p. 76. Marsh makes it clear that by the end of the century, professional musicians were finding it far more difficult to make a living, even if they were employed by wealthy patrons (and thus licensed).
4. Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, translation by Craig Wright. Translated from the original Latin found online at THESAURUS MUSICARUM LATINARUM at <http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/tml/start.html>. Retrieved on 15/2/2015 from [http://www.cengage.com/music/book\\_content/049557273X\\_wrightSimms\\_DEMO/assets/I\\_TOW/7273X\\_01\\_ITOW\\_Boethius.pdf](http://www.cengage.com/music/book_content/049557273X_wrightSimms_DEMO/assets/I_TOW/7273X_01_ITOW_Boethius.pdf),
5. Thomas Morley, *Canzonets, or Little Short Songs to three voices*, London, Thomas East, 1593. Available online at <https://archive.org/details/imslp-or-little-short-songs-to-three-voyces-morley-thomas>.
6. A staff can mean “A stanza or set of lines” or “A ‘verse’ or stanza of a song. Now stave.” *OED*, 19.b and 20.
7. Christopher R. Wilson and Michela Calore, *Music in Shakespeare, a Dictionary*, London, Bloomsbury, 2005, p. 78-9.
8. Cf Note to l.859, William C. Carroll, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, p. 176.
9. Ross W. Duffin, *Shakespeare’s Songbook*, New York, Norton, 2004, p. 442-3 and 446-7.
10. in *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England*, Cambridge, CUP, 2009, p. 135-172.
11. Thomas Campian, *Two Bookes of Ayres*, London, [c.1613], “To the Reader”. Available online at <http://www.luminarium.org/editions/camptwobookes.htm>.
12. *Chansons de maistre C. Janequin nouvellement et correctement imprimeez*, Attaignant, Paris sd. [1528] (<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55007129b>, last accessed 15 February 2015).
13. Wilson and Calore, *op. cit.*, p.27. Ross Duffin has recently persuasively argued that "Concolinel" is a mistranscription of the title of the French song “Qvand Colinet faisoit l’amour”. See Ross W. Duffin, “‘Concolinel’: Moth’s Lost Song Recovered?”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (Spring, 2015), p. 89-94).
14. Cf. Angus Gowland, “The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy”, *Past & Present*, vol.191, May 2006, p. 77-120.
15. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Printed by Iohn Lichfield and Iames Short, for Henry Cripps, Oxford, 1621. STC (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) 4159; Madan, I, p. 115 (Last accessed 15 February 2015 from EEBO).
16. As suggested by Frances Yates, quoted by Wilson and Calore, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
17. Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchésographie et traicte en forme de dialogue par lequel toutes personnes peuvent facilement apprendre & practiquer l’honneste exercice des dances*, Jehan des Preyzy,



Lengres, 1588, p. 96  
(<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k54531m/f192.image.r=Thoinot%20Arbeau,%20Orch%C3%A9sographie.langFR>, last accessed 15 February 2015).

18. *Ibid.*

19. Wilson and Calore, *op. cit.*, p.24.

20. Cf. Thomas L. Berger, “The Lack of Song in *Love’s Labor’s Lost*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Winter, 1975), p. 53-55.

21. Duffin, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

22. *Music and Society in Early Modern England*, Christopher Marsh, p.174 Though Marsh does not cite the source precisely, this is presumably Henry Percy (1564-1632), 9th Earl of Northumberland.

23. Robert Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses*, London, Robert Jones, 1583 (last accessed 14 February 2015 from EEBO).

24. Cf. David Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, London, Arden/Thomson Learning, 2006, p.158.

25. The cittern was a relatively cheap metal-strung instrument that was as ubiquitous as the lute in the Renaissance, and was commonly found at barber-shops or in taverns for use by customers. The carved head was used as a hook to hang the instrument on the wall. There are examples of citterns and cittern-heads at [http://www.cittern.theaterofmusic.com/old/plebanus\\_1131.html](http://www.cittern.theaterofmusic.com/old/plebanus_1131.html).

26. Wilson and Calore, *op.cit.* p. 141. A modern speaker would call it a form of theme with variations.

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## ABSTRACTS

*Love’s Labour’s Lost* has often been praised for its musical language, but it actually contains relatively few references to music compared to other plays by Shakespeare. Upon analysis, the elusive songs seem less relevant than the concept of dance as a potentially structuring metaphor, while much weight is given to the associations with Orpheus and Apollo, who simultaneously embody the power of poetry and of music, and are challenged in both respects by the closing songs.

*Peines d’amour perdues* fait souvent l’objet d’études critiques portant sur la musicalité de sa langue, mais la pièce contient somme toute relativement peu de références musicales. Les quelques chansons qui l’émaillent semblent moins structurantes que la métaphore de la

danse. Ce sont cependant les références implicites et directes aux mythes d'Orphée et d'Apollon, incarnations de la poésie tout autant que de la musique, qui permettent au dramaturge d'articuler sa remise en question du pouvoir de ces arts.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** musique, harmonie, ménestrel, Orphée, Apollon, Peines d'amour perdues

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