

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-107-69598-6 - A Study of Love's Labour's Lost  
 Frances A. Yates  
 Excerpt  
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## INTRODUCTION

### I. THE TEXT

*Love's Labour's Lost* is one of those plays which was published in Quarto during Shakespeare's lifetime. There are thus two original printed texts, the Quarto published in 1598 and the Folio published in 1623 in the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays. Modern bibliographical research is demonstrating that a text such as the "good" 1598 Quarto of *Love's Labour's Lost* is more than likely to have been printed from Shakespeare's autograph manuscript. Professor Dover Wilson bases his edition of the play in the Cambridge *New Shakespeare* primarily upon the 1598 Quarto text, and it is from that remarkable edition that quotations are made throughout this book. But the modern editor does not ignore the Folio text, for although *Love's Labour's Lost* in the Folio was printed from a copy of the Quarto, it contains alterations and additions derived from some other source. The character of these alterations suggests that this other source was the prompt-book used in the theatre when the play was being performed.<sup>1</sup>

On the title-page of this 1598 Quarto which is the primary source of the text are the words "Newly corrected and augmented". These words, and various other bibliographical considerations, led Dr Pollard to think it highly probable that an earlier pirated edition of the play, a "bad" Quarto, had preceded the 1598 Quarto, although no copy of this has yet come to light.<sup>2</sup> Some experts, notably Professor Dover Wilson, think that the words "newly cor-

<sup>1</sup> *Love's Labour's Lost* in the Cambridge *New Shakespeare*, edited by Sir A. Quiller-Couch and J. Dover Wilson, 1923, pp. 98, 186-91.

<sup>2</sup> A. W. Pollard, *Shakespeare's Fight with the Pirates*, Shakespeare Problems Series, 1920, p. 47.

rected and augmented", in addition to hinting at the preceding "bad" Quarto, also mean that Shakespeare had revised and altered the manuscript of the play, that he had written a version of it some years before and that this early version was later touched up by his hand. According to them the "newly corrected and augmented" 1598 Quarto was printed from this revised manuscript and they claim to be able to see many evidences in the printed text of the points at which the revision was made. But Sir Edmund Chambers<sup>1</sup> and others think that the existence of a previous pirated edition of the play would fully account for the words on the 1598 title-page and they do not think that there is sufficient evidence for the theory of extensive revision by Shakespeare of a first draft of the play.

The present study is entirely concerned with the working out of the topical bearing of the play and only touches upon textual or bibliographical problems in so far as these affect, or are affected by, the question of the date. The allusions to events and people which I believe that I can trace lead me to agree with Sir Edmund Chambers in thinking that the play was written practically as we have it (although some dangerous matters may possibly have been toned down before printing) some time during the year 1595. At the same time I am aware that the revision problem introduces a certain degree of hesitation into the dating of the composition of the play from allusions.

## II. THE LITERARY HISTORY OF THE PLAY

Everyone is agreed that *Love's Labour's Lost* is one of the most topical of all Shakespeare's plays, that it bristles throughout with allusions to contemporary events and to living persons, and innumerable are the efforts which have been made to explain its meaning in terms of the dramatist's environment. In the following brief sketch of the literary

<sup>1</sup> Sir E. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, I, 333-5.

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history of the play I cannot hope to mention every suggestion which has ever been brought forward in connection with it but only to outline those theories which stand with some stability amidst the general welter of surmise.

A topical problem confronts us before the play has even begun, for at the head of the list of *dramatis personae* we read the following four names: "Ferdinand, *King of Navarre*; Berowne, Longaville, Dumaine, *young lords, attending on the King*." It was Sir Sidney Lee who first pointed out<sup>1</sup> that these were names which would be in everybody's mouth during the fifteen-nineties because they were those of famous leaders in the contemporary French civil wars. But the real King of Navarre's name was, of course, Henry and not Ferdinand, whilst the Duc de Mayenne (Dumaine), far from being a young lord attendant upon him, was one of the heads of the Guise faction and therefore his sworn enemy. So that if Shakespeare intended these names to represent contemporary French history he carried out his intention in a singularly muddle-headed, or else wilfully frivolous, manner. Moreover, there is very little real history in the story of the play and most of what there is appears to be derived, as Professor Abel Lefranc showed, from certain episodes which occurred round about the year 1578 and which are mentioned in the *Mémoires* of Marguerite de Valois.<sup>2</sup> As these *Mémoires* and other accounts of Henry of Navarre and Marguerite de Valois were not yet available in print, Sir Edmund Chambers thinks that Shakespeare must have obtained any real historical information he deigned to use in the play from "some English or French traveller".<sup>3</sup> So much for the light-hearted use of a topical "news from France" atmosphere in this comedy.

<sup>1</sup> In the *Gentleman's Magazine*, October 1880, pp. 447-58.

<sup>2</sup> Abel Lefranc, *Sous le masque de "William Shakespeare"*, 1919, II, 33-103.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* I, 338.

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It is generally admitted that echoes of the famous controversy between Gabriel Harvey and Thomas Nashe are to be discerned in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Numerous parallels between remarks in the play and passages in the pamphlets have been collected<sup>1</sup> and although not all of these are accepted by all critics, there is one which seems conclusive, even to Professor H. B. Charlton<sup>2</sup> who seeks to minimise the Harvey-Nashe influence in the play. Alluding to Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse* (1592) Harvey says in his *Pierces Supererogation* (1593):

She knew what she said, that intituled Pierce, the hoggeshead of witt: Penniles, the tospot of eloquence: & Nashe, the verve inuenter of Asses. She it is, that must broach the barrell of thy frisking conceite, and canonise the Patriarke of newe writers.<sup>3</sup>

This is compared with,

*Holofernes.* Master Person—quasi pierce-one? And if one should be pierced, which is the one?

*Costard.* Marry, master schoolmaster, he that is likeliest to a hogshhead.<sup>4</sup>

There is no doubt that Harvey and Nashe lurk behind these lines, for the play on "pierce" and "person" proves this. Harvey's *Pierces Supererogation* was a reply to Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse*, and since "pierce" was then pronounced "perce", as Chaucer spelt it, Shakespeare's pun on "pierce" and "person" unmistakably refers to Nashe and to his quarrel with Harvey. There are other passages which bear this out. As the *New Shakespeare* editors say "Puns upon 'purse', 'pen', 'penny' obtrude themselves throughout the play when Moth is assailed or retorts: all of them meaning-

<sup>1</sup> See particularly H. C. Hart's edition of *Love's Labour's Lost* in the *Arden Shakespeare*.

<sup>2</sup> H. B. Charlton, "The Date of *Love's Labour's Lost*", *Modern Language Review*, XIII, 1918, pp. 257-66, 387-400.

<sup>3</sup> Gabriel Harvey, *Works*, ed. A. B. Grosart, 1884, II, 91.

<sup>4</sup> iv. ii. 87-90.

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less (so far as we can discover) unless referable to Nashe's *Pierce (i.q. Purse) Penilesse*."<sup>1</sup> Armado calls Moth his "tender Juvenal", and "young Juvenal" seems to have been Nashe's nickname among his contemporaries. The style of Moth's longest speech is reminiscent of Nashe's style and this, together with other details which they point out,<sup>2</sup> has led the *New Shakespeare* editors to the conclusion that Moth, in all probability, was meant to represent Thomas Nashe. The suggestion that Moth is Nashe was also made by Fleay who sought to connect the play with the Martin Marprelate controversy and to identify Armado, Holofernes, Costard and the other members of the comic underplot with the anti-Martinist writers Lyly, Nashe, Kempe, Bishop Cooper and Anthony Munday.<sup>3</sup> But the Marprelate controversy had faded into the Harvey-Nashe dispute by the time that *Love's Labour's Lost* was written and thus, although Fleay was probably right about Nashe, his other suggested "originals" may be abandoned. The most recent enthusiast for the Harvey-Nashe influence in the play is Mr Rupert Taylor who believes that he can find traces in it of Nashe's *Have With You to Saffron Walden* (1596).<sup>4</sup>

One of the most interesting of the already existing theories seeking to explain the topicalities of *Love's Labour's Lost* is that which maintains that the bulk of the satire in the play was directed at Sir Walter Raleigh and his group of mathematicians, astronomers, and poets. It was the late Arthur Acheson,<sup>5</sup> following a clue of Professor Minto's, who first suggested that there may be a connection between

<sup>1</sup> *Love's Labour's Lost*, in the Cambridge *New Shakespeare* edition, Introduction, p. xxii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. xx-xxiii.

<sup>3</sup> F. G. Fleay, "Shakespeare and Puritanism", *Anglia*, 1884, VII, pp. 223-31.

<sup>4</sup> Rupert Taylor, *The Date of "Love's Labour's Lost"*, 1932, pp. 34-51.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Acheson, *Shakespeare and the Rival Poet*, 1903.

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Chapman's *Shadow of Night* (1594) and *Love's Labour's Lost*.

O paradox! Black is the badge of hell,  
 The hue of dungeons and the School of Night. . .<sup>1</sup>

exclaims Navarre, and it is believed that Raleigh's coterie was known as the "School of Night", that Chapman's *Shadow of Night* emanated from that coterie, and that when Shakespeare makes Navarre speak of a "School of Night" in the play, this was a topical allusion which would have been as clear as day to the audience. It is further noted that in the lines,

Beauty is bought by judgement of the eye,  
 Not uttred by base sale of *chapmen's* tongues,<sup>2</sup>

Shakespeare may be alluding to Chapman's surname.

The "School of Night" theory is most interestingly set forth by the *New Shakespeare* editors in their introduction to *Love's Labour's Lost*. When Navarre and his attendant lords, Berowne, Dumaine and Longaville, determine to spend three years in seclusion and the pursuit of knowledge it is clear that astronomy is one of the subjects which they intend to study. Berowne obviously has scientific observers of the heavens in mind when he says:

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.<sup>3</sup>

The play bristles with continual hinting references to darkness, light, day, night, the sun, the moon, the stars—even to mathematical calculations. The *New Shakespeare* editors make the interesting observation that "none of the fantastics in this play can count". They give examples to illustrate this statement. "Holofernes shares with the other 'worthies' a curious incompetence in arithmetic: they can-

<sup>1</sup> IV. iii. 250-1.

<sup>2</sup> II. i. 15-16.

<sup>3</sup> I. i. 88-91.

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not tell their own number when they get together. Armado (i. ii. 39–54) cannot multiply one by three; Costard (v. ii. 488 *et seq.*) cannot multiply three by three. ‘I am ill at reck’ning, it fitteth the spirit of a tapster’, explains Armado, and Costard groans, ‘O Lord, sir, it were a pity you should get your living by reck’ning, sir.’ Again, in III. i. 87–97, we can see Armado reckoning up three laboriously on his fingers until Moth ‘stays the odds by adding four’. That these passages play insistently on *somebody’s* mathematical pretensions (well known to the audience) is surely evident.”<sup>1</sup>

Raleigh was the political rival of the Essex-Southampton faction and since many things seem to point towards Shakespeare’s sympathies having been strongly engaged on the Essex-Southampton side it would be not unnatural to find him making fun of Raleigh and his friends. The allusions to heaven’s lights, to mathematical calculations, to a “School of Night”—indeed the whole pretentious plan with which Navarre sets out of making his court a “little academe”—are therefore to be explained, according to this theory, as a mocking attack on the pretensions of the learned Raleigh group, one of the main interests of which was the study of the new Copernican astronomy. Raleigh himself is thought to be touched by the satire and also his familiar spirit Thomas Hariot, whose studies in optics and refraction are thought by some<sup>2</sup> to have something to do with the continual punning in the play on words such as “light”, “eyes”, “eyesight”, “see”, “look”, and so on.

An important feature of the “School of Night” theory is the use it makes of George Chapman and his works. Chapman seems to have been poet-in-chief to the Raleigh

<sup>1</sup> *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, ed. cit. Introduction, p. xxxi note.

<sup>2</sup> Miss Ethel Seaton made some interesting points in this connection in a paper on Hariot which she read to the Elizabethan Literary Society in February 1933. See also Dr G. B. Harrison’s *Elizabethan Journal*, 1928, pp. 398–400.

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group. His poetry has a strong intellectual, or, as the Elizabethan would say, “artistic” bent. He delights in a darkness, a profundity, which is not addressed to vulgar ears but to those choice and learned spirits who are capable of interpreting it. For him, learning is

the soul’s actual frame,  
Without which ’tis a blank, a smoke-hid flame . . .<sup>1</sup>

He published in 1594 an extremely obscure poem called *The Shadow of Night* which extols night and darkness in curious terms.

Since Night brings terror to our frailties still,  
And shameless Day doth marble us in ill;  
All you possessed with indepresséd spirits,  
Endued with nimble and aspiring wits,  
Come consecrate with me to sacred Night  
Your whole endeavours, and detest the light.  
Sweet Peace’s richest crown is made of stars,  
Most certain guides of honoured mariners,  
No pen can anything eternal write  
That is not steeped in humour of the Night.

Embedded in all this mystery are hints which seem to suggest that Chapman was interested in the new astronomical investigations and was not insensible to the poetry of higher mathematics. “Night” with him appears to typify the contemplation of deep matters, of those things hid and barred from common sense the knowledge of which is study’s godlike recompense. Thus, when he says that no pen can anything eternal write that is not steeped in humour of the Night, he appears to mean that much learning and a rigid intellectual training are an essential preparation for the development of a poet’s powers. It was to this kind of argument, it is said, that Shakespeare intended his *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, with its mockery of high-

<sup>1</sup> *The Tears of Peace*, 1609.



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flown intellectual pretensions and its allusion to the “School of Night”, as a reply.

I think one may say that this theory is now more or less generally accepted. The studious young men in the play can be interpreted as representing either the Raleigh group, immersed in their studies, or the Essex-Southampton group who laugh at schemes of that kind. Chapman lets us know who some of Raleigh’s friends were in his dedication to the *Shadow of Night* where he mentions the Earl of Derby (known as Lord Strange before coming into the title), Lord Hunsdon, and the Earl of Northumberland as being amongst those who pursue knowledge with proper seriousness. Efforts have been made to connect Derby with the King of Navarre in the play through his Christian name, which was Ferdinand, and through some punning on the word “strange”.<sup>1</sup> Lord Strange became Earl of Derby and also King of Man (the Isle of Man) in 1593 and died in the following year. No one, so far as I know, has attempted to look particularly for the other two mentioned by Chapman, namely Hunsdon and Northumberland, among the young lords in the comedy. If one takes the view that Berowne and his friends in their revolt against undue book-learning represent rather the lively Essex and his followers, then his two intimates the earls of Southampton and Rutland suggest themselves for inclusion.<sup>2</sup> In either case the play becomes an expression of the spirit of aristocratic faction.

Besides the joke against the members of the “School of Night” there was also afoot in the circle for which *Love's Labour's Lost* was written a joke against schoolmasters and pedants. Holofernes was a schoolmaster, constantly quoting

<sup>1</sup> Janet Spens, “Notes on *Love's Labour's Lost*”, *Review of English Studies*, VII, July 1931, pp. 331–4.

<sup>2</sup> J. Dover Wilson, *The Essential Shakespeare*, 1932, pp. 65–6. Professor Dover Wilson associates Derby with Essex, Southampton and Rutland.

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pedantic tags in Latin or in modern languages. He kept a most mysterious school, or “charge-house”.

*Armado.* Arts-man, preambulate. We will be singled from the barbarous. . . . Do you not educate youth at the charge-house on the top of the mountain?

*Holofernes.* Or mons, the hill.

*Armado.* At your sweet pleasure, for the mountain.

*Holofernes.* I do, sans question.<sup>1</sup>

“What was this charge-house? and where was this mountain?” enquire the *New Shakespeare* editors. “We are not told. The words refer to nothing that goes before or that follows, or indeed to anything else in the play. Yet they are pointed enough. The skirmish of the two fantastics over ‘mountain’ and ‘mons’ clearly underscores some point that the audience would take. It is lost to us: but can there be any doubt that Armado and Holofernes have stepped out of the fable for a moment to exchange a sentence or two of topical ‘back-chat’?”<sup>2</sup>

Some of the dialogue between the pedants and the fantastics seems to be a kind of satire on the textbooks generally read in schools, such as the eclogues of Mantuan, from which Holofernes misquotes the first line, or the numerous Latin dialogues or “colloquies” which were designed to teach boys to speak Latin. Professor Dover Wilson points out that in their second scene Holofernes and Sir Nathaniel “are made to parody the Latin colloquies which formed part of the staple fare in grammar schools of the period”.<sup>3</sup>

*Sir Nathaniel.* Laus Deo, bone intelligo.

*Holofernes.* Bone?—bon fort bon!—Priscian a little scratched—’twill serve.

*Sir Nathaniel.* Videsne quis venit?

*Holofernes.* Video, et gaudeo.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> v. i. 77–83.

<sup>2</sup> *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. cit. Introduction, pp. xviii–xix.

<sup>3</sup> J. Dover Wilson, “The Schoolmaster in Shakespeare’s Plays”, in *Essays by Divers Hands being . . . Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*, IX, 1930, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> v. i. 27–31.