

Professor Paul Dahlgren

Title

“Sweet smoke of rhetoric” *Love’s Labor’s Lost* and Hannah Arendt

Abstract

Hannah Arendt has become a touchstone for scholars working on Shakespeare and political theology along with thinkers like Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, and Adrianna Cavarero. However, despite its being one of a handful of plays mentioned by Arendt, very few scholars working in this field woke extensively on *Love’s Labor’s Lost*. Given that the play’s central concern about the role of love in the public realm, this is doubly surprising. Love is alternately theological, biopolitical, metatheatrical, and rhetorical in this play. Within *The Human Condition* Hannah Arendt famously argued: “love, in distinction from friendship, is killed, or rather extinguished, the moment it is displayed in public (‘Never seek to tell thy love/ Love that never told can be.’) Because of its inherent worldlessness, love can only become false and perverted when it is used for political purposes such as change or salvation of the world” (Arendt 1958, 51-52). This essay reconsiders the troubling ending of this play in light of Arendt’s comments arguing that the disappearance of love from the stage is the only way to preserve the idea of love. For Arendt, as well as for Shakespeare, love resides decidedly within the private realm—a metaphorically dark space where even language seems to fail us. Though love must enter the public as it must be communicated, “wooing doth not end like an old play” in that the public presentation of love, as in the marriage we expect in a comedy, fundamentally is at odds with love as it is imagined.

Biography

Paul Dahlgren is a Professor of English and Chair of the Department of English and Modern Languages at Georgia Southwestern State University. His research is primarily on Hannah Arendt, the history of rhetoric, and Shakespeare.

Useful Works

Londré, Felicia Hardison, ed. *Love Labour’s Lost: Critical Essays*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Lupton, Julia. *Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005 (and subsequent work by Lupton)

Parker, Patricia. “Preposterous Reversals: *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.” *Modern Language Quarterly*. 54 (1993) 435-482.

Prof. Geraldo Sousa

**Language at a Crossroads: Holofernes and the Inkhorn Controversy in *Love's Labor's Lost***

**ABSTRACT**

In the early modern period, scholars, writers, and educated speakers of the English language attempted to enrich the language with borrowings from Latin and other languages. This was in large part driven by the need for new words to express concepts resulting from the advancement of learning in all fields of study, and also to represent concepts from cross-cultural contacts and global expansion. The new borrowings were satirically referred to as "inkhorn terms," because they were freshly coined by the pen of the writers. In *Love's Labor's Lost*, Shakespeare offers a sustained satire of this phenomenon, pitting the learned schoolmaster Holofernes and his friend Nathaniel against Dull, Costard, and other less sophisticated users of the language. In the process, Shakespeare provides a fascinating record of an important formative stage of the English language. Numerous words first entered the written language in this period, but, many of them, after gaining acceptable English "clothing," found their way into everyday speech. In depicting this language feast in *Love's Labor's Lost*, Shakespeare provides a record of the linguistic forces that shaped the English language during his lifetime.

**In a Berowne Study, or, Rosaline’s Hospital:  
Daydreaming in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and of *Love’s Labour’s Won***

“Reft of desire, of relish destitute, / My melting mood suits not my motley suit.”

—Berowne, *Love’s Labour’s Won* (2.1.121-2)

What role does day-dreaming play in the study of Shakespeare? We might as well ask what role “study” itself plays in the study of Shakespeare because the primary definition of “study” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is “a state of contemplation or musing; a state of mental abstraction; a reverie. Now chiefly in *brown study* n.” But the field of Shakespeare studies seems to have forgotten this usage of the word, forgotten that “study” once meant more than its secondary definition in the *OED*, “the acquisition of knowledge or learning,” just as the wider culture has largely forgotten the phrase “in a brown study,” in which the bygone sense of “study” as “reverie” once chiefly thrived. While I doubt the apocryphal legend suggesting that “the whole of *Titus Andronicus* is based on one pun, that the word ‘coffin’ also means ‘pie-crust,’” I rather suspect a singular paronomasia is the origin and omphalos of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*: the word “study” refers both to “devotion of time and effort to the pursuit of knowledge, esp. by means of written sources... scholarly or intellectual work or effort” and to the kind of daydreaming or mind-wandering (“musing, mental abstraction, and reverie”) that for centuries has been viewed as the greatest distraction from, and obstacle to, “scholarly or intellectual work.” And yet at present no critical edition of the play offers confirmation for my suspicion. My essay will explore two consequences of our collective amnesia when it comes to the idea that “study” first and foremost means “reverie.” One consequence is that we have neglected the role that “study” qua reverie or daydreaming plays in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*; the other is that we have overlooked the ways in which “study” qua reverie or daydreaming could expand and enrich the field—and canon—of Shakespeare studies.

Scott Maisano is an Associate Professor of English at UMass Boston.

3 titles I’ve found useful: 1. 2. *The Limits of Critique*—Rita Felski (2015); 2. “The Aesthetic Resonance of Brown” Editors’ Introduction to José Esteban Muñoz’s *The Sense of Brown*—Joshua Chambers-Letson and Tavia Nyong’o (2020); 3. *Shakespeare and Lost Plays: Reimagining Drama in Early Modern England*—David McInnis (2021).

Danielle Sanfilippo  
SAA Abstract  
New Perspectives on *Love's Labour's Lost*

### Staging Effeminacy in *Love's Labour's Lost*

*Love's Labour's Lost* is having a renaissance of its own, as the existence of this panel indicates. In my essay, I will focus on new perspectives in staging this somewhat challenging play, particularly regarding effeminacy. In using the term effeminacy in this piece, I mean an immature, underdeveloped masculinity demonstrated by Navarre and his lords as well as other characters. Effeminacy is presented as a normal stage of development that the men must transition out of, guided by the women. The dynamics of effeminacy are on display right from the beginning of the play as Navarre makes the vow to avoid women, immediately forgetting the diplomatic visit from the Princess of France. Navarre and the lords predictably fall in love with the women at first sight, but their infatuations are depicted as immature. The men are primarily interested in writing bad poetry and masquerading as Russians to show off their grand passions, but a mature love comes from remaining loyal through hardships. It is no surprise that the women are unable to take their protestations seriously. The influence of love brings out the effeminacy in the lords and Don Armado, but the dark ending of the play forces them all to mature and prove that their infatuations will last. I will discuss two stage productions of the past five years, by the Royal Shakespeare Company, and the American Shakespeare Center to locate the potential for exploring the dynamics of effeminacy, maturity, and queerness. Both productions use setting, costuming, music and casting to make arguments about the nature of masculinity and love. How can these themes best be conveyed to an audience? What is it about this play that makes it more relatable for 21<sup>st</sup> century audiences?

Biography: Danielle Sanfilippo obtained their PhD from the University of Rhode Island. Their dissertation "The Skipping King": Masculinity and Effeminacy in Early Modern Drama uses presentist criticism to interrogate the boundaries of gender roles and sexuality. Their interests include performance studies, gender studies, and queer studies. They are currently teaching Gender Studies and Queer Studies at the University of Rhode Island.

#### Sources:

Billing, Valerie. "The queer language of size in *Love's Labour's Lost*." *Queer Shakespeare: desire and sexuality*, edited by Goran Stanivukovic and Vin Nardizzi, Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017, pp. 107-122.

Moncrief, Kathryn M. "'Teach us, sweet madam': Masculinity, Femininity, and Gendered Instruction in *Love's Labour's Lost*." *Performing Pedagogy in Early Modern England: Gender, Instruction, and Performance*. Edited by Kathryn Read McPherson and Kathryn M. Moncrief, Routledge, 2011.