



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE	KING LEAR	HAMLET	MACBETH	OTHELLO	ROMEO AND JULIET	JULIUS CAESAR	CORIOLANUS
CYMBELINE	TITUS ANDRONICUS	TIMON OF ATHENS	TROILUS AND CRESSIDA	ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA	KING JOHN		
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Love's Labour's Lost

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Symbole

posted Aug 7, 2013, 10:08 AM by alaa hagag [**updated Aug 7, 2013, 10:08 AM**]

Great Men

Rich or poor, the men in the play need people to look up to. The motif of heroes recurs again and again – go to "Shout Outs" for a running list. At one point Armado asks Moth what other great men were lovers. At another point, Berowne excuses his love by comparing himself to Hercules. The men seem to want to reassure themselves that their behavior is OK, that they're still big dogs. But are the men of *Love's Labour's Lost* heroes? Judging from the disastrous Pageant of the Nine Worthies, we'd say not. Shakespeare enjoys lampooning the men and reminding us that they are simply human.

Eyes

In one sense, you could make the argument that *Love's Labour's Lost* is all about the eyes. Berowne is especially obsessed with them. They are the vehicles through which knowledge reaches the mind, whether from books or from looking at a beautiful woman (the latter being Berowne's preferred method). They are the feature that makes one fall in love. You could write a whole term paper on eyes in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Nature

Sun, moon, roses, snow, geese, deer, cuckoos: the list of images drawn from nature could go on and on (and does, in Holofernes' lines). Shakespeare infuses his characters' speech with reminders that, no matter how many oaths they take, they can't escape nature.

Play within a Play

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A play within a play lets us watch characters watching something. This device gives us clues to their character and/or advances the plot. Having spent most of his life in the theater, Shakespeare loved this device. He used it most famously in [Hamlet](#), where Hamlet accuses his uncle of murder through a play put on by traveling actors. But we also see examples of the play within the play in [A Midsummer Night's Dream](#). In *Love's Labour's Lost*, Armado, Holofernes and the other rustics put on the Pageant of the Nine Worthies. This not only wraps up the motif of "Great Men" mentioned above, it provides another opportunity to contrast the behavior of the men and the women. While the men heckle and shame the rustics, even fanning the fire of Armado and Costard's potentially deadly rivalry, the Princess is kind and supportive. Perhaps her recognition of the King's display of immaturity is part of what prompts her postponement of their union at the end of the play.

Themes

posted Aug 7, 2013, 10:05 AM by alaa hagag [**updated Aug 7, 2013, 10:05 AM**]

Love

Shakespeare had a big vision of love. It's not just physical, spiritual, or intellectual – it's all of the above. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, love is the great synthesizer of humanity. Most of the characters want to be one thing: a warrior, a scholar, a teacher. They think they can only do these jobs well if they cut out the rest of life (and especially love). They discover, however, that love enhances everything else. For the main characters, physical attraction sparks a journey of towards becoming complete human beings. The journey doesn't end with the play's resolution. By writing an ambiguous ending, Shakespeare seems to suggest that the journey continues.

Education

In *Love's Labour's Lost*, the main characters are young people figuring how to live. There are no elders there to guide them, so they are self-educating. The men are extreme, taking vows to abstain from women,

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food, and sleep, the better to focus on their studies. In their world, education is social currency. When they're infected by love, however, their horizons broaden. Their senses sharpen. Their poems improve. The play's great argument is that education is bigger than books alone.

Cunning and Cleverness

In the world of *Love's Labour's Lost*, where men and women are kept apart, seduction takes the form of language. Instead of a plume of red feathers, the men have their wits. Intellectual conversations and witty banter are mating rituals indulged by nearly all characters that we meet. Prolonged volleys of wits establish sexual chemistry between two potential partners. Intelligence is also powerful, establishing status between characters. If you're not actual royalty, you've got to be the wittiest to stay on top.

Sex

In *Love's Labour's Lost*, sex and sexual attraction sparks self-discovery. If the characters hadn't been attracted to each other, they wouldn't have renounced their absurd, life-denying vows. If they hadn't renounced their vows, they wouldn't have been free to pursue love. If a character couldn't pursue love, he or she wouldn't experience the mind-bending, cataclysmic change of worldview that comes with it. Of course there's the satirical side of sex, too – the side that leaves a country wench pregnant and engaged to a zany character

Principles

The principles we see in *Love's Labour's Lost* are too restrictive, and too prescriptive for this open-air world. The play begins with young men taking oaths not to have any contact with women. But these men know nothing about women, and abandon their vow when the Princess of France shows up with her ladies-in-waiting. The play argues for a more liberal approach to principles, especially since the characters are young. They don't know themselves and they don't know the world.

Men and Masculinity

The men in *Love's Labour's Lost* are young and full of ambition. They want to be great men, strong, smart, and famous. They want to be Hercules and Solomon, all at once. They just don't quite know how to get there. Can't you just imagine this conversation happening: "Maybe if we do nothing but study for three years?" "And lift weights?" "No girls, okay?" But they're young. And they like girls. So they spend the play learning that they can be strong, smart, famous, and in love – and will be better men for it. This play calls into question what it means to be a man and how gender roles should be defined. Although, at the end, we seem to have more questions than answers. How do you think that *Love's Labour's Lost* conceptualizes masculinity?

Man and the Natural World

Nature is all around *Love's Labour's Lost*: in the setting, stage directions, and imagery. The action takes place in the open air. Exposure to the elements, which are gentle enough for the women to camp outside,

influences the characters' behavior and pervades their speech. They start comparing themselves and others to plants, animals, and celestial bodies – a virtual almanac. They climb trees and hide in bushes. Being in nature gives the characters permission give into their instincts to love.

Time

Time has a big role in *Love's Labour's Lost*. In the absence of the courtiers' birth parents, Nature and Time work together to teach their young charges. The lessons? Number One: timing matters. Number Two: there are things brought on by Time – like procreation and death – that no oath can control. The women know this, the men are learning it.

Literature and Writing

What happens when you fall in love? In *Love's Labour's Lost*, every lover must write a love letter. Writing is practically a prerequisite to being in love. Once a character explores the art of love-writing that character must endure the humiliation of either: 1) someone reading your letter aloud to strangers, or 2) your best friends eavesdropping on you and mocking your most intimate confessions. Despite the embarrassment, however, love is a wise and inspirational teacher, whose influence can be most clearly seen in the student's writing.

Major Characters

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Isabella

The main character, Isabella, is a very virtuous and chaste young woman who faces a difficult decision when her brother is sentenced to death for fornication (unlawful sex). Isabella does not approve of her brother's actions at all, but she pleads for his life out of loyalty and sisterly devotion. Isabella is a spiritual person who starts off wanting to become a nun.

The Duke

The other central figure is the Duke, who spends most of his time dressed as a friar in order to observe what is happening in his absence. The Duke is unfailingly virtuous, good, and kind-hearted. He tends to rule a little softly, which is why he enlists Angelo's help.

Claudio

Isabella's brother Claudio is a young man sentenced to death for impregnating an unmarried woman. He was engaged to her by a common-law agreement, but they had sexual intercourse before the legal marriage took place. Claudio depends less on the guidance of laws and religious practices than on his sister.

Lord Angelo

Angelo is the villain of the play, a man who rules strictly and without mercy. He has his own weaknesses, however, and he is loathsome more for his hypocrisy than for anything else. He presents Isabella with a difficult proposition and then does not even hold up his end of the bargain.

Escalus

Escalus is a wise lord who advises Angelo to be more merciful. He is loyal to the Duke and seeks to carry out his orders justly, but cannot go against Angelo's will.

Lucio

Lucio, described by Shakespeare as a "fantastic," is a flamboyant bachelor who provides much of the play's comedic content. He is a friend of Claudio's and tries to help him.

Mariana

Mariana was supposed to marry Angelo, but he called the wedding off when she lost her dowry in a shipwreck that killed her brother.

Mistress Overdone

Mistress Overdone runs a brothel in Vienna.

Pompey

Pompey is a clown who also works for Mistress Overdone.

Provost

The provost runs the prison and is responsible for carrying out all of Angelo's orders.

Elbow –

Elbow is a dim-witted constable who arrests people for misconduct, particularly of the sexual variety. He speaks in malapropisms and provides comic-relief throughout the play.

Barnadine

A long-term prisoner in the jail, Barnadine is sentenced to be executed together with Claudio. The Duke originally considers him hopeless and therefore dispensable but later changes his mind.

Juliet

Claudio's lover, she is pregnant with his baby.

Character

posted Aug 7, 2013, 9:47 AM by alaa hagag [**updated Aug 7, 2013, 9:47 AM**]

Ferdinand:

King of Navarre who resolves to live a life of virtue and deprivation for a 3-year period only to fall in love with the Princess of France

Berowne:

a lord of Navarre who reluctantly joins his king in living a life of virtue and deprivation for a 3-year period only to fall in love with the Lady Rosaline

Longaville:

a lord of Navarre who joins his king in living a life of virtue and deprivation for a 3-year period without reservations only to fall in love with the Lady Maria

Dumaine:

another lord of Navarre who joins his king in living a life of virtue and deprivation for a 3-year period without reservations only to fall in love with the Lady Katherine

Dull:

a constable who is susceptible to malapropisms

Costard:

a clown

Don Adriano de Armado:

a Spanish man of fashion who falls in love with the country wench Jaquenetta

Moth:

Armado's page

Jaquenetta:

a country wench

Boyet:

a lord attending on the Princess of France

Princess_of_France:

French princess who has beguiled King of Navarre Ferdinand according to Boyet

Lord_1:

another lord attending on the Princess of France

Maria:

a lady attending on the Princess of France and on whom the Lord Longaville takes an interest

Katherine:

a lady attending on the Princess of France and on whom the Lord Dumaine takes an interest

Rosaline:

lady attending on the Princess of France and on whom the Lord Berowne takes an interest

Forester:

a hunting guide who guides the Princess of France and her retinue to a spot most favorable for hunting deer

Sir_Nathaniel:

a curate (a clerical assistant) who associates with the pedant

Holofernes and is Holofernes' diametric opposite in terms of intellectual modesty

Holofernes:

a schoolmaster and a pedant whose book learning often gets in his way at perceiving the truth

Marcade:

the lord attending on the Princess of France who delivers the news of her father's—the French king's—death

Summary

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Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* centers around the fate of Claudio, who is arrested by Lord Angelo, the temporary leader of Vienna. Angelo is left in charge by the Duke, who pretends to leave town but instead dresses as a friar to observe the goings-on in his absence. Angelo is strict, moralistic, and unwavering in his decision-making; he decides that there is too much freedom in Vienna and takes it upon himself to rid the city of brothels and unlawful sexual activity. Laws against these behaviors and institutions already exist, and Angelo simply decides to enforce them more strictly. Claudio is arrested for impregnating Juliet, his lover, before they were married. Although they were engaged and their sexual intercourse was consensual, Claudio is sentenced to death in order to serve as an example to the other Viennese citizens.

Isabella, Claudio's sister, is about to enter a nunnery when her brother is arrested. She is unfailingly virtuous, religious, and chaste. When she hears of her brother's arrest, she goes to Angelo to beg him for mercy. He refuses, but suggests that there might be some way to change his mind. When he propositions her, saying that he will let Claudio live if she agrees to have sexual intercourse with him, she is shocked and immediately refuses. Her brother agrees at first but then changes his mind. Isabella is left to contemplate a very important decision.

Isabella is, in a way, let off the hook when the Duke, dressed as a friar, intervenes. He tells her that Angelo's former lover, Mariana, was engaged to be married to him, but he abandoned her

when she lost her dowry in a shipwreck. The Duke forms a plan by which Isabella will agree to have sex with the Angelo, but then Mariana will go in her place. The next morning, Angelo will pardon Claudio and be forced to marry Mariana according to the law.

Everything goes according to plan, except that Angelo does not pardon Claudio, fearing revenge. The provost and the Duke send him the head of a dead pirate, claiming that it belonged to Claudio, and Angelo believes that his orders were carried out. Isabella is told that her brother is dead, and that she should submit a complaint to the Duke, who is due to arrive shortly, accusing Angelo of immoral acts.

The Duke returns in his usual clothes, saying that he will hear all grievances immediately. Isabella tells her story, and the Duke pretends not to believe her. Eventually, the Duke reveals his dual identity, and everyone is forced to be honest. Angelo confesses to his misdeeds, Claudio is pardoned, and the Duke asks Isabella to marry him.

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