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Love's Labour's Won

about

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Love's Labour's Won: A Verse Play in Two Acts (1977)

David Fanstone

David Fanstone's verse play takes as its starting point the fact that *Henslowe's Diary* includes reference to as play called *Love's Labour's Won*, but that no such script has ever been found. Philip Henslowe was a well-known Elizabethan entrepreneur who undertook a wide range of activities in London: in 1587 he built the Rose, the first theatre on the Bankside and in 1594 he owned the theatre at Newington Butts, to the south of the City of London. In 1600, with Edward Alleyn , his son-in-law and the most famous actor in Elizabethan England (aside from Richard Burbage), he built the Fortune Theatre and in 1604, again with Alleyn, he purchased the office of the Master of the Game of Paris Garden, where bears were baited. In 1613 they built the Hope Theatre, used for theatre and bear and baiting. Henslowe died in 1616, four months before Shakespeare's death.

Henslowe's Diary was kept from 1592 to 1603 and contains a welter of useful information about the Elizabethan stage, including performance lists, records of transactions with players and playwrights, and details about costumes and props. On his death, the diary passed to Alleyn, and is now kept in the library of Dulwich College, founded in 1619 by Alleyn who had made his fortune in the theatre business.

Fanstone's play, then, issues from the dense historical context associated with Shakespearean theatre. As Fanstone himself states: "My plot device was that, after Shakespeare's death, an

ancient actor … kept the play hidden so that he might stage it for his final performance. His swansong. He is assisted in this by his patron the Duke of Belland, the Duke's two wastrel nephews, his troupe of octogenerian actors and an Abbess and her gaggle of apprentice nuns both kidnapped by the nephews on the way to St. Crispens" (email to Paul Stack, University of Guelph Library, Feb. 20, 2002).

Interestingly, in the same communication, Fanstone refers to the play not as an adaptation but as a "an entirely new verse play." The distinction is important and one of the more interesting problems relating to adaptation theory generally: is adaptation a function solely of slavish reliance on a source text (basically a plot reworking) or can it be seen as a more fluid theatrical form in which source texts, their historical contexts, and other factors come together to produce a related but distinctive work?

In this latter regard, Fanstone's play is heavily reliant on Shakespearean verse forms and style—and even features Shakespeare (or an actor made up to look like Shakespeare) as a character who speaks both the Prologue and the Epilogue. The opening lines point to the unusual way in which a modern-day play makes use of Shakespearean verse forms ("A script in verse entire today is rare") and sets the action near Avon, "where the Bard, / Oft penned his verse and chased his scansion hard."

The wealth of historical allusion evident in *Love's Labour's Won* and the attempt to recreate an Elizabethan stylistic marks an indirect mode of adaptation that is part of Shakespeare's legacy in Canada. Like Jerry Prager's *Rosaline and Benvolio* (also anthologized in CASP's online anthology) *Love's Labour's Won* takes on the problem of imagining and deepening the historical and stylistic contexts of Shakespearean theatre, whether through reference to Shakespeare himself or to one (or many) of the plays he wrote. This sort of theatrical work, imaginatively driven by retrospection, if not nostalgia for the historical forms and language associated with Shakespeare, is a distinctive mode of adaptive practice. That adaptive practice seeks to map a contemporary sense of theatricality onto an antecedent historical context, a practice that in fact profits from the linkages it clearly makes with an iconic figure like Shakespeare even as it seeks its own distinctive form of expression. The pattern is familiar enough in a Canadian colonial context in which retrospective and foundational social and cultural forms collide with the desire to create an autonomous and distinctive identity in relation to those forms.

Fanstone's play ends with "Couples altar bound," a familiar enough closural device associated with Shakespearean theatre and one that is enhanced by the stage device of having an actor disguised as Shakespeare unveiled after the first verse spoken by the Epilogue. The play thus reinforces its Shakespearean influences as it ends.

Performed in two venues in 1977 (Niagara Falls and Kingston), the play was well-received for its "neo-Shakespearean swashbuckling" style (John Fedor. "New troupe gives bright performance of local playwright's Labour's Won." *Niagara Falls Review.* N.d.) and its

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“Elizabethan mold” (ibid.). It was performed by Pendragon, a youth theatre company “formed to do mainly Canadian plays” (ibid.) and the play was recognized immediately for the way in which it uses “bits and pieces of many of the Shakespearean plots of the comedies, not attempting to reconstruct any one plot line but mixing them all up most gloriously” (E. H. Lampard. “Love’s Labor’s Won, sparkling entertainment.” *St. Catharines Standard*. Jan. 4, 1977). E. H. Lampard’s review of the play closes with the comment that “Mr. Fanstone has written a splendid play in blank verse that sounds very much in the manner of Shakespeare. If producers are looking for Canadian plays to produce—as most of them claim to be doing—they ought to make contact with Mr. Fanstone.” The comment highlights the degree to which, however unthinkingly, Canadian theatrical identity has traditionally been mapped onto Shakespearean adaptation.

Daniel Fischlin

play

posted Aug 10, 2013, 7:21 AM by alaa hagag **[updated Aug 10, 2013, 7:21 AM]**

Act I

Act I Scene 1

Set in Navarre [in the Pyrenees at the modern France-Spain border]. The king of Navarre has resolved to engage with his disciples in a war "against your own affections"--"Navarre shall be the wonder of the world; Our court shall be a little academe." He persuades his attending Lords, the reluctant Berowne, Longaville, and Dumaine, to sign a pledge of scholarly pursuit and renunciation of wordly pleasures, particularly women.

Costard, a rustic and clown, and Dull, a constable, present to the king a letter from the "refined" pompous braggart, Don Adriano de Armado of Spain, who has fallen in love with Jaquenetta, a dairymaid. He is visiting the court, accompanied by his page Mote.

Act I Scene 2

Armado has promised to study with the king for 3 years.

Act II

Act II Scene 1

The Princess of France arrives with her attending ladies and her attending lords including Boyet. She has come on an embassy to persuade the king to give up his claim to Aquitaine [SW France], the financial details of which are not initially acceptable to the king. The king informs her that they must be housed outside the court gates because of his pledge. Berowne immediately is attracted to the dark-complexioned Rosaline, Dumaine to Katharine, and Longaville to Maria. The Princess sets immediately to plotting a "civil war of wits".

Act III

Act III Scene 1

Letters are sent from Armado to Jaquenetta and from Berowne to Rosaline via Costard, but the clown mixes up the recipients.

Act IV

Act IV Scene 1

Boyet reads Armado's letter to the amused Princess and her ladies while they are hunting.

Act IV Scene 2

Holofernes, a schoolmaster and pedant, and Nathaniel, a curate, discuss the hunt in a scholarly terms with much Latin. Jaquenetta asks Nathaniel to read the letter she has received,

which proves to be from Berowne to Rosaline.

Act IV Scene 3

The king and his lords are busily and surreptitiously composing love sonnets to the new targets of their affections. Jaquentta arrives with Berowne's letter and gives it to the king. Berowne confesses his new interest and all four resolve to forsake their oaths once only in order to pursue their intended loves. They resolve to move into battle as as soldiers fighting for love.

Act V

Act V Scene 1

Holofernes and Nathaniel engage in more pedantic word play. Armado has been commisioned by the king to make a presentation of a pageant to the Princess, and Holofernes advises Armado to base it on the Nine Worthies (a list which variably included Julius Caesar, Joshua, King David, King Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Boulogne plus the five named below).

Act V Scene 2

The Princess shows to her ladies the jewel she has received and other love tokens they have received from their new suitors, including letters which they critique. Boyet informs them that the men are planning on coming to them disguised as Russians. The women plan to receive them also masked and with the Princess and Rosaline switching disguised identities. The men arrive and are mocked and played with. The men leave and return as themselves, the women now also being out of disguise. The king wishes to lead the Princess to his court. But Rosaline implies the Russians were fools and the men are forced to confess their unsuccessful ruse and the king is teased for offering a favor to Rosaline when she was disguised like the Princess. Armado arrives. A presentation of five of the Nine Worthies is made with Armado serving as Hector of Troy, Costard as Pompey, Nathaniel as Alexander the Great, Mote as Hercules, and Holofernes as Judas Maccabaeus, all to the playful derision and teasing of the viewers. But suddenly Marcade arrives with news of the Princess' father's death. The playfulness comes to

an end, the Princess must leave that same night. The king wishes to pursue the wooing, but the Princess chastises him for breaking his initial vow, and advises that he seek a lonely hermitage and live there remote from the world's pleasures for a year. If he completes this successfully, she will accept him. Katharine want Dumaine to wait a year also and to grow a beard in the interim, and Longaville is also to wait. Rosaline advises Berowne to spend a year visiting with the speechless sick and groaning wretches in a hospital. Armado has agreed to work at farming for 3 years in order to win Jaquenetta. The play ends with the finale that had been planned for the performance, a sung dialog between Spring (a time when the cuckoo mocks married men) and Winter (when the owl sings at night).