

Love's Labour's Lost

Love's Labour's Lost is one of William Shakespeare's early comedies, believed to have been written in the mid-1590s, and first published in 1598.

Etymology

The name of the play comes from a poem written by the Greek Theognis:

"To do good to one's enemies is love's labours lost."

Synopsis

Facsimile of the first page of Love's Labour's Lost from the First Folio, published in 1623: The play opens with the King of Navarre and three noble companions, Berowne, Dumaine, and Longaville, taking an oath to devote themselves to three years of study, promising not to give in to the company of women — Berowne somewhat more hesitantly than the others. Berowne reminds the king that the princess and her three ladies are coming to the kingdom and it would be suicidal for the King to agree to this law. The King denies what Berowne says, insisting that the ladies make their camp in the field outside of his court. The King and his men comically fall in love with the princess and her ladies.

The main story is assisted by many other humorous sub-plots. A rather heavy-accented Spanish swordsman, Don Adriano de Armado, tries and fails to woo a country wench, Jaquenetta, helped by Moth, his page, and rivaled by Costard, a country idiot. We are also introduced to two scholars, Holofernes and Sir Nathaniel, and we see them converse with each other in schoolboy Latin. In the final act, the comic characters perform a play to entertain the nobles, an idea conceived by Holofernes, where they represent the Nine Worthies. The four Lords — as well as the Ladies' manservant Boyet — mock the play, and Armado and Costard almost come to blows.

At the end of this 'play' within the play, there is a bitter twist in the story. News arrives that the Princess's father has died and she must leave to take the throne. The king and his nobles swear to remain faithful to their ladies, but the ladies, unconvinced that their love is that strong, claim that the men must wait a whole year and a day to prove what they say is true. This is an unusual ending for Shakespeare and Elizabethan comedy. A play mentioned by Francis Meres, Love's Labour's Won, is sometimes believed to be a sequel to this play.

Date and text

Most modern scholars believe the play was written in 1595 or 1596, making it contemporaneous with Romeo and Juliet and A Midsummer Night's Dream. Love's Labour's Lost was first published in quarto in 1598 by the bookseller Cuthbert Burby. The title page states that the play was "Newly corrected and augmented by W. Shakespere," which has suggested to some scholars a revision of an earlier version. The play next appeared in print in the First Folio in 1623, with a later quarto in 1631.

Sources

Love's Labours Lost is, along with The Tempest, a play without any obvious sources. Cymbeline falls into this category to some extent, although that play draws strands of its narrative from some texts agreed on by modern scholars.[citation needed] Some possible influences can be found in the early plays of John Lyly, Robert Wilson's The Cobbler's Prophecy (c.1590) and Pierre de la Primaudaye's L'Academie française (1577).

Characters

Ferdinand:	King of Navarre
Princess of France	
Berowne, Longaville, and Dumaine:	Lords, attending on the King
Boyet and Marcade :	Lords, attending on the Princess of France
Rosaline, Maria, and Katharine:	Ladies, attending on the Princess
Don Adriano de Armado:	a fantastical Spaniard
Sir Nathaniel:	a Curate
Holofernes:	a Schoolmaster
Dull:	a Constable
Costard:	a Clown
Moth:	Page to Armado
A Forester	
Jaquenetta:	a country Wench
Officers and Others, Attendants on the King and Princess	

Performance

The earliest recorded performance of the play occurred at Christmas time in 1597 at Court before Queen Elizabeth. A second recorded performance occurred in the first half of January 1605, either at the house of the Earl of Southampton or at that of Robert Cecil, Lord Cranborne. The first known production after Shakespeare's era was not until a Covent Garden version in 1839, with Elizabeth Vestris as Rosaline.

Reputation

Love's Labour's Lost is often thought of as Shakespeare's most flamboyantly intellectual play. It abounds in sophisticated wordplay, puns, and literary allusions and is filled with clever pastiches of contemporary poetic forms.[citation needed] It is often assumed that it was written for performance at the Inns of Court, whose students would have been most likely to appreciate its style. This style is the principal reason why it has never been among Shakespeare's most popular plays; the pedantic humour makes it extremely inaccessible to contemporary theatregoers.

Adaptations and cultural references:

Fiction

Thomas Mann in his novel *Doctor Faustus* (1943) has the fictional German composer Adrian Leverkühn write an opera on *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Film

Main article: *Love's Labour's Lost* (2000 film)

Kenneth Branagh's 2000 film relocated the setting to the 1930s and attempted to make the play more accessible by turning it into a musical. However, the film was a box office and critical failure.

Music

Gerald Finzi wrote incidental music to the play *Love's Labour's Lost* for a BBC live radio broadcast of the play in 1946. The music was subsequently converted into an orchestral suite.

Television

The play and its apocryphal sequel, *Love's Labour's Won*, are featured in a *Doctor Who* episode, "The Shakespeare Code". A reference to the play is found in the title of *Futurama* episode 104, *Love's Labours Lost in Space*.

Radio

BBC Radio 3. Aired 16 December 1946 Director: Noel Illif. Music by Gerald Finzi Cast: Paul Scofield, Thea Holme, Robert Marsden, Ernest Milton, others.

Radio adaptation of the Shakespeare play. A written transcript of the production is held at the Birmingham Central Library as part of their Shakespeare Collection. Gerald Finzi's *Love's Labour's Lost Suite* had its origins in this performance. "The small-scale radio context meant that it was originally scored for a small chamber orchestra." -Julie Sanders, *Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings*, Cambridge, UK 2007.

BBC Radio 3. Aired 22 Feb 1979. Director: David Spenser Music: Derek Oldfield Cast: Michael Kitchen-Ferdinand, King of Navarre; John McEnery- Berowne; Anna Massey Princess of France; Eileen Atkins-Rosaline; Paul Scofield- Don Adriano de Armado; Andrew Branch-Dumaine; Christopher Biggins Anthony-Dull; Clifford Abrahams-Moth; Clifford Rose-Nathaniel; Denise Coffey-Jaquenetta; Elizabeth Proud-Maria; Eric Allan-Monsieur Marcade; Frances Jeater-Katherine; Jeremy Clyde-Longaville; John Baddeley-Costard, John Rye-Boyet; Robert Stephens-Holofernes

Source: wikipedia