

Camp on Campus: *Love's Labour's Lost's* Queer Scholar

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ABSTRACT

This article reconsiders *Love's Labour's Lost* in view of contemporary antagonisms between experts and non-experts. The link is both thought-provoking and illuminating. The first section explores this tension as it emerges through Shakespeare's inchoate figure of 'the scholar', at once upheld and undermined. Here, the scholar-figure hovers between common and elite, erudite and buffoonish, utterly refined and hopelessly base. 'He' is also distinctively set apart from 'she': the women of the play who prove themselves much more worldly than their wordy counterparts. The second section furthers this particularly gendered portrayal and follows Berowne's peculiar navigation of this dichotomy, noting his camp queerness as an ironic paradox that functions beyond binary dualisms and which points, through queer failure, to a possible method of dismantling today's corrosive political rhetoric.

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In a nutshell, you scholars are arrogant. You always see the rest of us as lacking intelligence. A person can be very intelligent without all that scholarship. - Herman Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund*

Introduction

This essay turns to William Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* against a backdrop of fast-expiring Humanities departments, ever more frequent book-burnings, and swelling waves of populist anti-intellectualism.¹ This recent turn to a more solidly felt – and expressed – *ressentiment*, one particularly aimed at those perceived as 'experts', is a worrying scene. Recall Donald Trump's first campaign, when he famously claimed that 'experts are terrible', or Michael Gove, who professes his own disdain a year later: 'I think the people of this country have had enough of

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¹Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. William C. Carroll. All citations to this play are from this edition.

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experts with organisations with acronyms saying that they know what is best'.² Several other public figures have followed in their footsteps, too many to name.

It is no wonder, then, that the present reading of *Love's Labour's Lost* (henceforth *LLL*) finds in it a staging of this antagonism, its radical/radicle exposed as scholarliness and the mockery thereof. Whether falsely construed or not, this dichotomy has consistently and historically structured predominant modes of thought running the gamut of cultural, political, and pedagogical discourse. In quick listing fashion, one may mention the *aristoi* and the *hoi polloi* of Heraclitus, Trentowski's *inteligencja* in contrast with Arnold's *philistine*, or Nietzsche's (and later Shaw's) *Mensch* and *Übermensch*. More current terms circle the same hostilities: the highbrow and the lowbrow; the cultured and the white trash; the patrician and the plebian (or simply 'pleb'); the select elite and the herd of sheep (often affectionately trimmed to 'sheeple'); the Narcissus and the Goldmund; the pedant and the plain old stupid.³ This cultural confrontation built on the basis of erudition is not only familiar; it is prolific. *LLL*, where 'bookmen' and 'unlettered' cross paths and purposes, is yet another example of this twofold antipathy (2.1.223, 1.1.236).

How closely Shakespeare's scholarly figures correspond to the present-day academic, or whether our universities' late-capitalist neoliberalism is presently decried in the play, are relevant questions, but not quite the aim of this essay. The composite image of the scholar, as shall emerge from the following analysis, is by no means a stable one. It would be more apt, then, to foreground its intrinsic instability and refusals of identity, consequently allowing for contemporary resonances without recourse to seemingly straight, contingent lines between today's scholarliness and its Early Modern conceptions.

The first section of this article will note how *LLL* does not merely or uncritically uphold this opposition between the highly educated and the lowly uneducated. As is typical, 'Shakespeare's allusive reach [...] comprehends both the popular and the learned'.⁴ We might laugh along with the characters of *LLL* because we recognise that old trope of lofty, scholarly minds up against the practical reality of the world. But we also sympathise with the most obvious victim of this conflict, Berowne, whose need for constant rhetorical contortions demonstrates the impossibility of finding solid footing on either camp.

The second section continues to follow Berowne's navigation of this division, and finds in *LLL*'s embrace of this paradoxical instability a particular queer campness and celebration of failure, deployed as a mode of scholarliness that dismantles – and indeed resists – stratification into either the academic or

²See, for instance, Gass, "The experts are terrible" and Portes, 'Who needs experts?'. See also Nichols's prophetic *The Death of Expertise*.

³For a list of other intellectually hostile terms from Tudor England – thus providing very relevant context to *LLL* – and for a 'philology of stupidity' through Early Modern texts more broadly, see Zucker's *Shakespeare Unlearned*, especially the introductory chapter. Shakespeare's 'unlettered' seems related to 'unlearned', though Zucker makes no note of the term and it appears to be Shakespeare's own invention.

⁴Wood, 'Taking *Love's Labour's Lost* Seriously', 208.

the populist. Of course, such an interpretation immediately makes itself felt as anachronistic – and this is what *LLL* most beautifully excels at. Many queer, gendered, and feminist readings situate the play's contextual ties to the pedagogy and homosociality of the Early Modern period more generally, with both being formative spaces from which Shakespeare's writing emerges. Keeping in mind drama's particularly dialogic nature, however, the twenty-first century audience which now receives the play is able to observe *LLL*'s operations of ironic reimagination as potentially forceful also in our contemporary milieux, where academic life remains much in need of such reimagination if experts are not to realise the distant authoritarian monstrosity feared by those excluded from their circle.

As such, this article investigates *LLL*'s forbidding trappings and contradictions of the scholar – as someone whose academic jargon and reclusive disposition alienate them from the world in which they are supposed to participate – and reads the play's problematic ending as one that, fittingly, only mock-resolves the issue. Indeed, *LLL* critically fails to move beyond the point of its initial framing. This failure, though, is here taken at face value: that is, as the very driving force or *modus operandi* of the play, rather than some shortcoming. Its paralysed scholars, unresolved plots, and unfinished structure thus point to a queer mode of knowledge, and its undertakers become a queer sort of knowers. The liminal figure of the student-scholar, as enacted by Berowne and the rest, becomes a figuration of a destabilised academic authority, opening alternative, collaborative pedagogies where errors and disrupted binaries foster creativity. In this light, *LLL* critiques the academy's elitism, mocks scholarly pretension, and forwards a camp, love-infused model of scholarship – ironic, performative, and communal – resonant with contemporary challenges to intellectual authority yet devoid of their loveless hostility.

Before expanding on the above and moving on to the proper argument of this essay, one may keep in mind other Shakespearean scholars, broadening scope and layers of meaning alike. Perhaps Horatio is the one who most immediately springs to mind. 'Thou art a scholar. Speak to it', Marcellus implores him.⁵ As brief and oft quoted as they are, Marcellus's words immediately present a dual and conflicted characterisation of the scholar: as someone who *can* speak, and, moreover, as someone who *must* speak; as someone who is supplicated for sedentary knowledge, yet commanded to action. Nonetheless, the question remains: what is a scholar to say, and does anyone living want to listen?

The Two Camps: Bookmen against Unlettered

While the action of *LLL* carries itself in the manner of *commedia dell'arte* under only the vaguest political motives and replete with misadventurous antics, the

⁵Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1.1.45, 168.

serious conflict between scholarly and anti-scholarly attitudes calcifies the play's entire skeleton. Seeing as how the opposition faced by our wordy scholars stems from the worldly attitudes pointing out their folly, the central tension of the play may be phrased as one of Word up against World. In *LLL*'s universe, we discover, one ought to belong to either one or the other.

This is evident from the first scene of the play, comprising the scholars' oath and our introduction to the setting. Beginning with the latter – a 'curious knotted-garden' or somewhat undomesticated park or grounds – we find ourselves situated in a space suggested by the very etymology of 'academia' (1.2.239). The word, after all, derives from the Greek proper noun *Akadèmeia*: 'the grove belonging to Akádēmos, a Greek hero of the Trojan War', and later 'the name of a park near Athens and of a school held in a grove of the park where Plato taught'.⁶ The fact that '[m]any modern productions have placed the [opening] scene in a library' upholds this twinning of plot and studiousness.⁷ But John Barton's 1978 RSC production – featuring set designer Ralph Koltai's dense autumnal foliage and two solitary, leaf-strewn benches – is in this regard more notable. It is not only truer to the original, wilder setting but also to the spirit of Navarre's court-*cum*-'little academe', whereby the autumnal (hence receding) park of Navarre points to a certain necessary division between the public *polis* and the forced seclusion of learning (1.1.13). This natural space is far from the city's quotidian *oikonomia* and much closer to the retreating of *philosophia*.⁸ In its open isolation, the setting itself sets the scene for this central conflict, where a commitment to the word necessitates a withdrawal from the world while remaining vulnerable to its intrusion.

This is reified in the textual document to be signed by the King and the three lords (Longaville, Dumaine, and the central Berowne) on their path to becoming 'fellow scholars', where the vocational quickly becomes obligatory under the literal philosopher-king Navarre (1.1.17). For three years, they are to study with minimal nourishment ('[a]nd one day a week to touch no food' at all). Second, they are 'to sleep but three hours in the night'. Last is the directive to 'not see a woman in that term', which becomes the most impossible of these 'barren tasks, too hard to keep' (1.1.37-48). Interestingly, while the oath has already been sworn before the play begins (see 1.1.34, 50-2), these 'strictest decrees' have been added to its form as binding, quasi-Faustian contract (1.1.117).⁹ Berowne is, understandably, rather vocal about this contrarious mismatch

⁶"Academy", in *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology*, 6 (my italics).

⁷Carroll, *LLL*, note to 1.1.61.

⁸Barton's programme poster, for instance, displays only a thick foliage from the worm's point of view, and none of the actual characters. It is notable that even the most *outré* adaptations, such as Branagh's unpopular one (combining the play's academic court with the interbellum 'Hollywood Academy style of 1930s golden age musical comedy'), nonetheless retain the academic element, usually 'a stylized Oxbridge', a 'vast circular "Bodleian" library', and a 'large grassy area' (Wardle, 'Academe and academy', 154, 157).

⁹For further links between *LLL* and *Doctor Faustus*, see Brown, 'Shakespeare's Anxious Epistemology'. Brown focuses on the early modern recasting of authoritative knowledge, while the present argument hones in on the scholar who (supposedly) possesses it.

between the scholar's ideal (voluntary study of the world) and his reality (compulsory separation from it), finding himself sworn, paradoxically, '[t]o know the thing [he is] forbid to know' (1.1.60).

As it transpires, what Berowne seems most anxious of is his forcible separation from worldly women.¹⁰ Indeed, his trepidation at this homosocial, male-prioritising division of man and woman in *LLL* is much in keeping with the anxieties of Shakespeare's cultural context. As noted by Valerie Billing, 'Shakespeare's plays were composed in a culture with a [deeply ingrained] homosocial imaginary' wherein 'Renaissance ideals of union based on likeness' fostered 'a culture with a homonormative, rather than a heteronormative, world view'.¹¹ This, however, came at a cost. Alan Stewart's *Close Readers*, which focusses on anxieties around sodomy in 16th and seventeenth century England, follows the ramifications of a homosociality of 'likeness' when (possible or perceived) sodomitical practices within the clergy were extended to other socially garrisoned groupings. The 'closed monastic houses, the vows of chastity, [and] the segregation of the sexes' certainly make for a clear reflection of *LLL*'s scholarly commitments. The definitions previously applied to the religious are thus, in the Early Modern period, rather logically extrapolated to the scholarly whose relations were 'essentially relations *between men*' and who thus diffuse the previously 'clear demarcation of sodomy within the monastery walls to the confused ubiquity of sodomy within humanistically informed patronage relationships'.¹²

Despite these homosocially exclusive proclivities, the princess of France and her attending ladies do, of course, intrude on the scholars' contractual solitude within their ivory tower's 'forbidden gates' – the play's initial peripeteia – and test our scholars in much the same way Virginia Woolf, visiting Oxbridge, tests the reasoning behind academia's exclusion of women (2.1.26).¹³ In this clash of cultures, however, how and why men are presented as one with 'word' and women with 'world' – and the play's own queer response to this division – seems to lack appropriate commentary in most critical works around the play.¹⁴

Beginning with the former, the educated men of the play, in fact, might as well be referred to as 'bookmen': that is, strange, hybrid creatures made as

¹⁰Cf. Keilen, 'Shakespeare's Academy', 152, 156: 'The academy is a notional framework for masculine development, a way of imagining how boys become men' imbued with 'homosocial value' at the expense of women.

¹¹Billing, 'Sexuality and Queerness', 449–50.

¹²Stewart, 'Close Readers', xv, xx, xix. See also Bray, 'Homosexuality and Signs of Male Friendship'. Stewart's focus – how Renaissance scholars ritualised and romanticised relations with sought-after patrons for purposes of social mobility, thus furthering the damning collocations of sodomy – is not taken up here in light of *LLL*'s only vague appropriation of patronage, especially since the King cannot be taken for a patron figure since patrons are not, and nor do they want to be, scholars themselves.

¹³'Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me', Woolf observes, obliquely minding the 'queer' tailless Manx cat [double-entendre] on the university lawn. Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 5, 10.

¹⁴It is interesting that *Love's Labour's Lost* is rarely accounted in queer-focused Shakespearean studies, such as Burt's *Unspeakable ShaxXSpeares*, which never mentions the play. It is mentioned only once and in passing in similar works such as Sinfield's *Shakespeare, Authority, Sexuality and Menon's Unhistorical Shakespeare*.

much of words as of flesh. Beside *LLL*'s main quartet, the audience has also Don Adriano de Armado, Sir Nathaniel, and Holofernes as principally intellectual characters, and the central defining feature of each of our seven erudite men is neither their histories nor ambitions nor loves, but their ludicrous verbosity. Consistently and throughout the play, the educated are described as being words incarnate, much in line with 'a variety of [contemporaneous] humanist educational projects' publicly questioned during the play's composition.¹⁵ The scholars, in fact, are not only 'becoming mirth', but literally 'wearing papers', conversing amongst themselves not *of* but *in* literary terms, as when Armado asks Moth to begin his '*l'envoy*' (2.1.67, 4.3.40, 3.1.60).¹⁶ Boyet, the lord attending the princess, at one point even designates Navarre as book (whose heart is with the princess's 'print impressed', and whose 'face's own margin did quote such amazes'), close-reading not only the situation but Navarre 'and his book-mates' as quotable script (4.1.93, 2.1.233, 242).

The educated figures are all very much trapped in their own wordiness. Holofernes, especially, cannot escape using too many words (e.g. 'the face of *terra*, the soil, the land, the earth', when one would clearly suffice), and Armado, a man 'of fire-new words' who 'hath a mint of phrases in his brain', is prepared to 'turn sonnet' as the only way he can think of to express his love (4.2.5-6, 1.1.163-176, 1.2.149). Longaville, too, who is displeased with his own love poem, can think of only one tautological alternative: to tear it up 'and write in prose' (4.3.49). Even the height of Cupid's love, as exemplified by Berowne's oft-anthologised sonnet to Rosaline, cannot escape bookishness: 'Study his bias leaves and makes his book thine eyes | [...] | If knowledge be the mark, to know thee shall suffice', he writes to Rosaline, comprehending her as textual artefact even as he tries to reject his studious dispositions (4.2. 97-9).

Indeed, *LLL*'s scholars do not so much produce words as internalise them by way of ingestion. When Holofernes incredulously accuses the 'barbarous' Dull of 'monster Ignorance', he is clearly acting upon a binary which separates the scholar from the 'undressed, unpolished, uneducated, unpruned, untrained, or rather unlettered' (4.2.10-16). The curate Nathaniel goes on to explain the difference between the two camps as such:

Sir, he hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a book.

He hath not eat paper, as it were; he hath not drunk ink. His intellect is not replenished. He is only an animal, only sensible in the duller parts. (4.2.21-3)

¹⁵Wood, 213. The backdrop of Shakespeare's topical satire took aim at intellectuals such as Giovanni Florio, Giordano Bruno, and – very debatably – Sir Walter Raleigh's mythic School of Night (directly mentioned in Arden and Penguin editions, 4.3.246, and with special inferences applicable to the Earl of Northumberland). This satirising also connects to the complex attitudes around Harvey-Nashe literature, the Gray's Inn Revels of 1594-5, and the general anti-scholastic and humanist debates of the time. Studies of this historical grounding have been carried out already, and here would be more of a tangent. On this, see, for instance: Yates, *A Study of Love's Labour's Lost* (esp. 20-6) and Reid, 'The spectre of the school of night'.

¹⁶*L'envoy* is a 'postscript to a literary work'. Carroll, *LLL*, note 60, 96.

The very ‘taste and feeling’ of paper and ink, therefore, are the scholars’ bread and water (4.2.26). Books are apparently so vivacious they can breed (book)men, and ‘words continually “beget” other words’ in an act of ‘promiscuous fertility’.¹⁷ Scholars, therefore, are those who ‘have lived long on the alms-basket of words’, and the unerudite, who ‘have been at a great feast of languages’, are excluded from the table and can only steal ‘the scraps’ (5.1.31-5). ‘Most dull, honest Dull’, in fact, can only meekly reply to the scholars’ insults with a lame observation – ‘You two are book-men’ (the second instance of this term) – and with a riddle that is solved dishearteningly quickly by his intellectual interlocutors (5.1.126, 4.2.31).

Contrary to what Holofernes thinks, though, and in line with what has been intimated above, this scholarly or wordy identity is not solely reserved for the nobility. As opposed to someone like *The Merchant of Venice*’s Prince of Arragon, who ‘will not jump with common spirits | And rank himself with the barbarous multitudes’, *LLL*’s scholars live alongside ‘barbarians’ who exhibit a commonality with their social superiors through their selfsame wordy, ridiculous identities.¹⁸ Early Modern patronage and sycophancy does reveal humanist scholarliness as being an ‘entirely elite phenomenon’, rather than ‘the fellowship of the commons’; it reinforces the notion that, ‘in the scholar’s mind, arguably no distinction is more fundamental or enduring than that between scholars and lay people’.¹⁹ However, Dull’s constant malapropisms, for instance, or Costard’s rhetorical obfuscations and redundant repetitions, turn Armado’s desire to ‘be singled from the barbarous’ into one unsatisfiable (5.1.65-6). The puns and double-entendres of young Moth – who is especially notable in his ability to swing from scholar to vulgar – are also much a part of this verbal levelling. The ‘well-educated infant’ similarly understands himself in literary terms (‘Like the sequel, I’) and his role as ‘page’, in keeping with the play’s own inclination for puns, can clearly be (mis)understood as the page of a book (1.2.78, 3.1.117, 3.1.59). Moreover, his very name – deriving from the French *mot* – means nothing but ‘word’. Even austere Boyet exhibits the scholarly tendency to ‘[peck] up wit as pigeons peas’, and, notably, Costard’s punishment to ‘fast a week with bran and water’ while facing ‘a year’s imprisonment’ is the very mirror of the scholarly oaths, uncovering him as the disguised bookman he is (5.2.315, 1.1.273-4, 1.1.264).

The non-academic characters are thus merely more of the same – a palimpsest of lively words – and to them, too, the ‘most incony vulgar wit’ is, ‘as it were, so fit’ (5.1.65, 4.1.135-6). This ‘verbal gluttony’,²⁰ in Carroll’s words, is reflected in the constant and conspicuous imagery of textual bodies throughout the play, where there is ‘profound confusion between texts and

¹⁷Carroll, *Great Feast of Language*, 154.

¹⁸Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, 2.9.32, 117.

¹⁹Keilen, 142.

²⁰Carroll, *Great Feast*, 11.

persons’.²¹ Here one finds a veritable ‘physiology of reading’, as Carla Mazzio aptly puts it, ‘as lovers and texts entwine’ and ‘love becomes a pre-text in the most literal sense’.²² One may, therefore, go so far as to say that each of *LLL*’s male figures – whether scholars by profession or propensity – do not so much create wordplay as they are created by it. Words are produced only insofar as they can be eaten, and the male figures are more of the same type-script than different types of men. The ‘low scholars’ of *LLL*, as one may term Costard and the rest, thus join in the ‘great feast’ of words and exemplify ‘characters who would have been excluded from grammar school training but whose words, bodies, and emotions nonetheless have a great deal to tell us about the institution that made them possible’.²³

As such, privileged educational backgrounds and class tensions are far from the crux of the play. *LLL*’s attention to humanism’s ‘alternative economy of social relations, which produces anxiety’ and therefore a self-awareness and – reflexivity, thus provides us with a different mode of interpreting the ‘double ethic of similitude of studies and [homosocial] friendship’ as presented in the play.²⁴ Our attention is sought otherwise, where it is the women of *LLL*, rather than the underclass, who emerge as anti-academic in their heteronormative intrusion on homosociality.

Characterising them as ‘anti-academic’ is not to say that the women are prosaic and direct; indeed, the royal ladies often outwit their scholarly counterparts through clever wordplay and pranks, more than capable of matching ‘mock for mock’ (5.2.140). They even understand themselves to be ‘book[-wo]men’, too, ones as ‘[b]eauteous as ink’ or a ‘golden letter’, and ‘fair as a text B in a copy-book’ (5.2.41-4). Despite this, one cannot exactly say that *LLL*’s woman can be properly at one with our bookmen if, should the law be followed, she partakes only ‘[o]n pain of losing her tongue’ – that is, symbolically castrated of her organ of production and literally denied of verbal prowess (1.1.121-2). In Navarre’s academic grove, in fact, they are considered ‘the weaker vessel’ and ‘child[ren] of our grandmother Eve’, tempters in the garden who have come ‘to besiege [Navarre’s] court’, and Armado feels justified in proclaiming that ‘Love is a devil’ (1.1.246-52, 2.1.86, 1.2.140). They are the profane World impinging on the sanctimonious isolation of the Word, and this is a division firmly built not merely on the basis of gender, but also its place within the social sphere as either inside or outside the circles of academia.

In light of this open antipathy towards the women’s intrusion into an exclusive masculine space, then, there is now the consideration that *LLL*’s central conflict is between homosociality and heteronormativity, rather than one

²¹Enterline, *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom*, 32-3.

²²Mazzio, ‘The Melancholy of Print’, 189, 195.

²³Enterline, *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom*, 7.

²⁴Stewart, xxix, xxvii.

summed up as merely between ‘men’ and ‘women’ (hence why ‘word’ and ‘world’ is here the preferred binary throughout). In resisting a bridging between male and female, the male figures’ domestic single-sex community becomes one which ‘imaginatively incorporates possibilities of kinship and intimacy that no longer had a place in late sixteenth-century England’,²⁵ and the women’s rebuffed co-fraternity (a meaningful misnomer with no proper counterpart) reconfigures their role into that of ‘lipstick lesbians’.²⁶ In the lords’ sonnet-reading scene, for instance, one gets the definite impression that the sonnets ‘are as much for each other as for their female beloveds’, an action difficult to parse with ‘the gender-focused terms we use today that divide homoeroticism from heteroeroticism’.²⁷ This aligns with Jeffrey Masten’s view, in *Queer Philologies*, that there was in Shakespeare’s time not ‘a single “homosexuality,” but rather multiple homoeroticisms – homoerotic discourses, practices, or structures that are neither self-identical (sodomy is not friendship is not pederasty) nor the same as the modern notion of “homosexuality” qua identity’.²⁸

Sustained homosociality thus reinforces the word/world binary at work throughout *LLL*; while the scholars find themselves paralysed in their own wordplay, the women are much more figures of sensible, worldly action. Not only are they on stage precisely in the name of political engagement – diametrically opposed to the scholars’ retreat from the *polis* – but their ‘self-sovereignty’ sees them take tangible action, such as when they hunt the deer (or pricket!) in an assured show of Shavian female power that makes man ‘no longer [...] victor in the duel of sex’ (4.1.36).²⁹ Whereas the men cannot ‘speak to be understood’, their letters ‘too long by half a mile’ and their speech ‘promoting verbal matter at the expense of signified matter’, the women’s language does not collapse into absurdist senselessness and complete detachment from practical reality, but is instead more geared towards both practical and utilitarian motives (5.2.294, 54).³⁰

This binary of word/world is nowhere clearer than in *LLL*’s ending, alternately labelled problematic or enigmatic. The promising symmetry of King and (now) Queen, and three noble men for three noble ladies, is frustrated by the bathos of an offstage death, and the audience is left with a deferred comedic resolution which, as the Queen says, only *might* take place ‘at the expiration of the year’ (5.2.777).

This potential comic ending can only actualise if the ladies’ ultimatums are met. The Queen’s, which charges the King with spending an ‘austere insociable’

²⁵Sanchez, *Shakespeare and Queer Theory*, 75

²⁶Menon, ‘The L Words’, 187.

²⁷Billing, ‘Queer Language of Size’, 107–08.

²⁸Masten, 4.

²⁹Shaw, ‘Epistle Dedicatory’, xii. Notably, despite his overt anti-Shakespeare stance, Shaw also repeatedly refers to his own powerful woman, Ann, as a huntress.

³⁰Calderwood, ‘A Wantoning with Words’, 318.

year in 'some forlorn and naked hermitage', is problematic in that it seems a sentence much like what Navarre had already volunteered for before the Queen's visit – confirming scholarly solitude rather than breaking it (5.2.769-73). Rosaline's dictum for Berowne, on the other hand, is clearer. She charges him to '[v]isit the speechless sick and still converse | With groaning wretches; and [his] task shall be | With all the fierce endeavour of [his] wit | To enforce the pained impotent to smile' – and to this he must likewise commit for a 'twelvemonth' (5.2.819-22). The scholar is asked, then, to strike a balance between being wordy and being worldly if his interiority and bookishness are not to remain in irresolvable tension with the outside world. Under the guidance of their counterparts, the scholars must put their academic knowledge in practical use for the greater good through demolishing their self-distinctions from the 'unlettered' and 'speechless' populace, meeting privileged nobility with 'groaning wretches'. Only consequently can the walls between the men and the women be similarly collapsed. The scholars' task, then, is very much contrary to their asceticism, and becomes an *engagement* – as much with the world as it is in the romantic sense.

LLL's 'wooing doth not end like an old play' (5.2.842). Shakespeare terminates the play in a song whose speakers are not directly identified (and so this is variedly staged and interpreted). The song is a dialogue between Spring, sung by one assuming the role of the Cuckoo, and Winter, sung by one assuming that of the Owl. The cuckoo symbolises sexual life, vigour, and worldliness, its name a conscious echo of the 'cuckoldry' which '[m]ocks married men' (5.2.864). Contrary to what William C. Carroll writes – that this 'does not apply to anyone in the play, since all the marriages are deferred' – it would be no stretch to observe that this nonetheless applies to anyone under oath: such as our four scholars, avowed to a life of study but brazenly guilty of infidelity.³¹ Spring, life, worldliness: this is what scholars paradoxically love and betray, and this only is reinforced through the solitary and opposing owl of Winter, who sings of icicles and lone figures (definitely no cuckoldry here), whose nocturnal nature evokes another of the scholars' austere vows (to be nocturnal and celibate), and whose rallying cry is, to wit, 'Tu-Whit' (5.2.883).

This song-dialogue makes felt a sense of cyclicity and the propriety of the natural order, where all is in balance. Indeed, the song's emphasis on balanced oppositions is much a stylised continuation of the ultimatum given to Berowne and his companions, who are urged to unite their real marriage to their contractual vows (that is, to the solitary word) with their desired marriage to the ladies (that is, to an engagement with the world).

This Aristotelian *via media*, to speak in '[h]onest plain words', is in truth rather frightening (5.2.727). Its 'putting knowledge to practical use' heralds the policies around academic impact factors, 4* quality research, and the

³¹Carroll, LLL, note 866-7, 176. This is once more missed by Carroll in *Great Feast* (cf. 215-6, 222).

‘publish or perish’ culture which governments hope will placate the unwashed mob beating at the doors of the ivory tower. It is a judgement of pedantry that runs parallel to, in Adam Zucker’s words, the ‘classifications or ranked judgments of teachers, students, texts, and modes of education’ that ‘mask [...] a wider network of economic or political relationships that subtend or structure the limits of [...] the educational field’.³² Indeed, this decreed reformation brings with it ‘a darker perspective [...] where scepticism reigns and the materiality of repetition involving the mundane [...] obscures a world of [scholarly] vision and imagination’.³³ No wonder *LLL* cannot be said to be a comedy.

It may be considered fortunate, however, that *LLL* fails to locate its desired resolution, seeing as how the play contains three great motions against this utilitarian equilibrium of binaries; after all, their being held in balance only further reinforces the distinctions that divide them. The first motion is the deferment of the actual ending itself. The dénouement of the plot never lands on true resolution, for ‘[t]hat’s too long for a play’, and thus tension palatably remains (5.2.846). Second, there is the very last line of the play itself, possibly spoken by Armado: ‘You that way, we this way’ (5.2.897). It is unclear whether this is spoken metadramatically, between cast and audience (which would not be atypical for Shakespeare), or amongst the cast (the men to the ladies, for instance). Whatever the interpretation, the resolve of academic utility and the supplementary balance of the natural order are rather severely undercut by a final line which testifies more to schism than unity, where ‘Jack hath not Jill’ (5.2.843). Third, there is that brilliant irony in Rosaline’s charge to Berowne – that scholarliness should go out into the world – which nonetheless requires him to break his oath; between word and world, then, the point of connection is simultaneously a site of breakage.

In this tripartite contradiction of Spring and Winter (and the ladies’ orders), the play effectively refuses the supposed ‘balance between the forces’ of the play’s finale, one that should metamorphose our scholars out of what Robert Hunter calls ‘their previous superficial and inadequate attitudes’.³⁴ The opinion, such as Sean Keilen’s, that ‘the song of Spring and Winter celebrates participation in a common [unified] life’ in this light becomes tenuous.³⁵ Likewise, the view that ‘[t]he seasonal songs [...] re-establish a sense of time as cyclical, not linear and therefore hopelessly irretrievable’ is precisely why the play is as unresolved as it started (contrary to Carroll’s inference that the songs indicate the start of permanent change).³⁶ Neither in spring nor winter, we are back in Navarre’s autumnal park, where we started.

³²Zucker, 106.

³³Wood, 221.

³⁴Hunter, ‘The Function of the Songs’, 60-2.

³⁵Keilen, 171.

³⁶Carroll, *Great Feast*, 214.

'What is the end of study?' Queer Campness and Failure as Third Path

Nowadays, 'scholar' is a queer word. Apply it in earnest to yourself, and no one will take you seriously. Use it ironically, and the resulting sniggers are only possible in a joint recognition of something serious being mocked. After all, as Linda Hutcheon notes, 'even humorous ironies can be deadly serious'.³⁷ This sheds some light on Berowne's rather contradictory admission, in the first scene's contract-signing, when he pretends he only 'swore in jest': an act of mocking seriousness while being seriously mocking (1.1.54). He follows this with a cutting, self-ironic question which haunts the rest of the play: 'What is the end of study, let me know?' (1.1.55).

Berowne's is a 'serious joke of [our] own scholarly affect', as Zucker notes, and sets the tone for the scholar-figure's confused position, one affirmed and negated in the same breath.³⁸ The erudite scholar ought to be separated from the lower and 'unlettered' classes, but *LLL* has the latter act just as academic (in all senses) as the former. The scholar is to be secluded from women – that is, from engagement with the world – but is simultaneously tasked and driven '[t]o know the thing [he is] forbid to know'. In short, if *LLL* muddies the scholar's distinctions of class, education, and reclusiveness – frequent definitions, more frequently parodied – then what *does* make a scholar a scholar?

Adding to this complexity is the scholar's fluctuating position within what is foregrounded as the binary of virtue and sin, promise and oath-breaking. When the princess tells Navarre that it is 'deadly sin to keep that oath [...] | And sin to break it', she means that scholarliness as a complete detachment from the world is a sin, but that it is likewise sin to betray sworn study through worldliness (2.1.104-5). That would be Spring's cuckoldry. Indeed, the scholars' attraction to the world outside their campus (in the form of women who come from beyond) does lead them to 'infringe an oath', and their Head of Department, so to speak, moves from being a 'virtuous duke' to one who wittily uses virtue to cast virtue aside: 'the *virtue* of your eye must *break my oath*', he promises the Queen (4.3.136, 2.1.38, 5.2.346).

The multiple and contradictory twists of rhetoric utilised by Navarre, Berowne, and the rest – even by the Queen, who claims that 'virtue's office never breaks men's troth' despite the play's resolution depending on it – only emphasise this impossible position between choosing to sinfully forsake the world or the word (5.2.350, 749-50).

To survive, it seems, one must remain at an ironic distance, never serious about either. Berowne is the one who most clearly understands this. His 'ironic perspective recognizes the exclusion inherent in naming' himself either a scholar or man of the world, and this 'allows contradictory fusions

³⁷Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge*, 25. Here recalling also Donna Haraway's definition of irony being 'serious play' (as quoted in Hutcheon, 30). Cf. Zucker, 90: 'satire often reinforces the social value of the satirized object'.

³⁸Zucker, ix.

of identity to emerge'.³⁹ He is a bookman through and through, yet 'for barbarism [he has] spoke more | Than for that angel knowledge' (1.1.112-3). He brings up all sorts of intellectual arguments against scholarly intellectualism, leading to his obvious state of strained paradox as famously observed by Navarre: 'How well he's read, to reason against reading' (1.1.94). While Berowne argues that passive 'study evermore is overshot' – an obvious contrast to the worldly and bow-wielding princess – he never ceases to be witty or rhetorical (1.1.140). No wonder Berowne feels like a dog chasing his own tail, 'coursing [him]self': he realises that the scholarly mind must 'murder to dissect'.⁴⁰ Even if study manages to capture the world, it would be 'as towns with fire – so won, so lost', both sworn and forsworn (4.3.1, 1.1.144).

Berowne, then, is two incongruent parts: scholar and barbarian, saint and sinner. It is a queer position to occupy and, in light of the virtue/sin binary, one that is heretical. In his long, convincing speech in Act IV, he assails the concept of study in these same religious terms: 'we have made a vow to study, lords, | And *in that vow we have forsworn* our books', meaning, ironically, the women: 'They are the books, the arts, the academes, | That show, contain, and nourish all the world' (4.3.287-8, 321-2). Later on, he most explicitly decries the absurd uselessness of '[t]affetta phrases, silken terms precise, | Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation' – as well as the '[f]igures pedantical' that deploy them – but, as Carroll rightly notes, it is yet another 'wonderfully ironic' move that 'Shakespeare has Berowne forswear fancy language and high-flown rhetoric' all 'in the form of a regular Shakespearean sonnet' (5.2.406-8).⁴¹ Though his 'wit is at an end', he goes on being witty, and Berowne's ironic position in the play is a mirror of the scholar's paradoxical position and impossible earnestness, either in love or in study (5.2.430).

The heretical is, crucially, not the atheistic: heresy necessarily comes from *within* faith, not from outside. When Berowne continually attacks studiousness – 'Fie, painted rhetoric!', he exclaims rhetorically – he attacks his own nature (4.3.230). He is the apostate who continues to practice his belief, the heretic scholar merging *aristos* and *hoi polloi*, *highbrow* and *lowbrow*, and all the rest. Nathaniel, as usual, is therefore proven wrong: the scholar is not so neat as to be 'strange without heresy' (5.1.5). Berowne is the contradictory 'learned fool' – that is, the foolosopher, the scholar who is simultaneously an anti-scholar, the anti-intellectual intellectual (5.2.70-2). And if queer subjects are those 'who unravel, who refuse to cohere; subjects who refuse 'being' where being has already been defined as a self-activating, self-knowing, liberal subject', then Berowne, in his heretical and self-unravelling incoherence, is a queer figure indeed.⁴²

³⁹Renegar and Sowards, 'Liberal Irony, Rhetoric, and Feminist Thought', 331.

⁴⁰Wordsworth, 'The Tables Turned', 149.

⁴¹Carroll, *LLL*, note 402-15, 156.

⁴²Halberstam, *Queer Art of Failure*, 126, 106. As Masten notes in *Queer Philologies*, the queer letter 'Q' is the province of heresy' (14).

This un-becoming subject-in-crisis is aligned with what Shakespeare both observed and endured in contemporaneous pedagogy: an Early Modern system that fractured masculine identity even as it sought to create it. Keeping in mind what was noted earlier of the Early Modern homosocial imaginary, and given that *LLL*'s homosocial circles are academic (or academic-dependant), the questions of how 'early modern pedagogy affect[ed] experiences of sexuality and desire' and 'how the all-male grammar school affected the emotional registers of early modern masculinity' are important.⁴³ After all, 'those people and institutions which early modern society pointed to as sodomitical: the beating schoolmaster, the cloistered monk, [and] the humanist bedfellow' share education as their common seat.⁴⁴ Enterline interrogates the issue at length and with nuance, tracing the multifarious links between the performance of literary oration and that of masculinity, links which make it 'impossible to separate language lessons from embodiment' (hence, *bookmen*).⁴⁵ An educational-meets-disciplinary programme in which imitation was preferred over authenticity meant that, ultimately, 'early modern pedagogy fractured the unity of the masculine identities it was explicitly designed to produce'.⁴⁶

On that note of embodiment, what must not be neglected is 'the centrality of boys' buttocks in early modern anxiety as both the object of sodomitical desire and the target of the schoolmaster's cane', one which 'displaces onto a single man the anxiety registered by the sixteenth-century educationalists, forging intimate knowledge transactions with other men on the basis of the shared secret of the *dolorem infandum*, the pain not to be spoken'.⁴⁷ Flogging thus enacts those 'systematic intrusions of adult fantasy that young boys encountered during early years of school discipline', a locus through which both child and adult become anxiously 'divided, self-monitoring [...] subjects'.⁴⁸ Perhaps, then, this essay should have utilised a different term for 'scholar': Armado calls Holofernes 'Arts-man', which denotes an erudite man of learning ... but is also a cheeky pun on 'arse-man' (5.1.65).

This is the sole explicit recollection of beating schoolmasters in *LLL*, but the play does more fully take to task Early Modern pedagogy's effects on identity. Although not directly named by Enterline, *LLL*'s scholars very clearly recall/mock the schoolroom's emphasis on (Latin) oratory performance and imitation, a dramatisation that leads to what Enterline calls the "'habits of alterity" at the heart of schoolboy "identity"; that is, how 'the grammar school's daily demand for verbal and bodily mimicry performed in public under the threat of punishment would produce rhetorically capable "gentlemen" only by

⁴³Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom*, 22, 9.

⁴⁴Stewart, xlv.

⁴⁵Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom*, 22.

⁴⁶Ibid., 65.

⁴⁷Stewart, 88, 121.

⁴⁸Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom*, 69, 38.

keeping such identity at a distance'.⁴⁹ In the 'rhetorical pyrotechnics' of *LLL*'s scholars (whether 'low' or 'high' in status), then, one observes 'a deep, unstable conflict at the heart of the very regime of identity and difference (between girls and boys, mother and father tongues, vulgar and learned)'.⁵⁰ Shakespeare draws on how scholars 'achieved their place in their social world by being drilled in the art of feeling and conveying passions that came from somewhere else and someone else', fully resulting in a "character," whether personal or literary'.⁵¹ Even at their truest, then, *LLL*'s scholars are never more than a character or caricature of the learned individual. This self-division, this other-in-the-self, wherein scholars seek their identity through its displacement and through performative artifice – and, importantly, where doing so involves homosociality as a 'transgression of the social order' – is how *LLL* most clearly directs our attention to its queer dynamics and abeyance of identity.⁵²

Queerness can here be foregrounded in its multiple resonances. There is the obvious fact that queer theory – as a 'a continuing moment, movement, motive' which is 'recurrent, eddying, *troublant*'⁵³ – is an apt lens any time binaries and dichotomies are troubled. There are also the more obvious gender inversions already alluded to above and commented on by various critics.⁵⁴ It would also be interesting, should there be the opportunity, to read the deferred ending of this problem play as one rejecting any ameliorative or self-affirmative future, indeed even childbearing, testifying to the contemporary links often constructed between queerness and the death-drive.⁵⁵

However, given that the concept of 'camp' queerness sheds the clearest light on the play's conflicted constructions and dissolutions of identity while embracing its irony, humour, and joy – not to mention 'campness' being, as of yet, critically (and surprisingly) unexplored in studies around *LLL* – it is well worth our focus here. Leaving to one side the consistent critical stress on *desire* and 'the many erotic alternatives the play offers to monogamous cross-sex bonds and heterosexual teleologies', camp encourages us to focus instead on *attitude*.⁵⁶ The camp attitude – wherein embodied subjectivity involves 'a social, rhetorical, and visual staging' that plays between 'persona and person' – does seem to emerge as the play's most forceful queer element.⁵⁷ *LLL* is, after all, rather exceptional among Shakespeare's plays in being 'as self-

⁴⁹Ibid., 7-8.

⁵⁰Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom*, 37, 22.

⁵¹Ibid., 29-30.

⁵²Billing, 'Sexuality and Queerness', 445.

⁵³Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, viii.

⁵⁴See, for instance, Erickson, 'The failure of relationship' and Parker, 'Preposterous Reversals'.

⁵⁵On queer theory's resistance to reproductive futurism and chrononormativity, see, among others, Edelman's *No Future*, Freeman's *Time Binds*, and Halberstam's *Queer Time and Place*. Of course, the play's anti-reproductive ending has roots in tradition dating as far back, at least, as Chaucer's 'The Parliament of Fowls' and the medieval *conflictus* more generally (cf. Carroll, *Great Feast*).

⁵⁶Billing, 'Queer Language of Size', 118.

⁵⁷Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom*, 47-8.

consciously “artificial” and “theatrical” as this’.⁵⁸ However, just as the ‘gentlemen’ coming out of Early Modern education might never have succeeded in being authentic, instead remaining riddled with ‘performance anxiety’, the play’s transformation of assumed categorical rigidities results, as we shall see, in a figure that is not necessarily or unconditionally successful.⁵⁹

When conceptualised, camp can perhaps be best surmised, as Susan Sontag writes, as ‘a love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration’, veering as far as the ‘really outlandish’ done in ‘the spirit of extravagance’.⁶⁰ It is ‘a sensibility that, among other things, converts the serious into the frivolous’, and vice versa – much like Berowne’s ironic distancing from, and inhabitation of, his mock-serious preoccupations.⁶¹

Campness, though, is performed by more than just Berowne. Holofernes the pedant, at one very amusing point, depicts the scholar/camp figure as such: ‘His humour is lofty, his discourse peremptory, his tongue filed, his eye ambitious, his gait majestical, and his general behaviour vain, ridiculous, and thrasonical. He is too picked, too spruce, too affected, *too odd*’ (5.1.8-11). Though here specifically referring to Armado, also wickedly described as ‘a plume of feathers’, the irony is that all this applies to Holofernes himself; ‘[i]t takes one to know one’, Carroll playfully intones (4.1.87).⁶² After all, as Armado says of Holofernes in turn, the latter is also ‘exceeding fantastical’, and if Armado is ‘vane’ (a pun on ‘vain’), then Holofernes is likewise ‘too, too vain’ (4.1.88, 5.2.523-4). It needs no pointing out that Navarre, Berowne, and the others – in their exceeding bombast, verbosity, bookishness and affectations – are more of the same.

This scholarly campness becomes ‘something of a private code, a badge of identity even’, leading to its apparent senselessness to those outside the circle (such as Boyet, a ‘straight man’ in both senses of comedy and gender performance).⁶³ However, this is not some firm or essentialist identity, since camp is often ‘style at the expense of content’, a ‘glorification of “character”’ where one’s being, as was the case with Early Modern gentlemen, is only ‘Being-as-Playing-a-Role’.⁶⁴

This ‘theatricalization of experience’ is nowhere clearer than in *LLL*’s two moments of fantastically horrendous acting and impersonations.⁶⁵ In the fifth Act, the King and his three lords attempt a different tactic for wooing: dressed ‘[l]ike Muscovites or Russians’, masked and disguised, they approach their targets ‘in mockery merriment’ (5.2.121, 139). The ladies, however,

⁵⁸Carroll, *Great Feast*, 65. This also concerns the relation between the *actors* and their *role* (cf. 88).

⁵⁹Desai, *Blotted Lines*, 215.

⁶⁰Sontag, ‘Notes on Camp’, 275, 283.

⁶¹Ibid., 276.

⁶²Carroll, *Great Feast*, 135.

⁶³Sontag, ‘Notes on Camp’, 275. An interesting comparison arises between the exclusivity of a language such as *polari* and that of the scholars.

⁶⁴Sontag, ‘Notes on Camp’, 278, 285, 280.

⁶⁵Ibid., 283.

having been forewarned by Boyet, disguise themselves too, and trick the men in turn into courting the wrong partner (while themselves seeming ‘to have no difficulty in recognising the men’).⁶⁶ The reverse-trick is unnecessary, of course: the scholars set out on their mission with ‘zealous laughter [...] profound’, fully expecting failure in their lack of seriousness, and, even if they had somehow miraculously succeeded, it would not be they who succeeded in love but, of course, ‘the Russians’ (5.2.116). This is rather queer optimism, where success nonetheless means failure (to woo or meet expectations, for instance).⁶⁷ The fifth Act then transposes into an even more extravagant display. The burlesque show of the Nine Worthies is staged by the rest of our scholars (Holofernes, Don Armado, Sir Nathaniel, Costard and Moth representing other ‘old mocker[s]’ as in a mirror), and it is mercilessly heckled and collectively enjoyed in its ridiculous ridicule (5.2.540).

In both instances above, the scholar-figures fully enact campness as ‘the proper mixture of the exaggerated, the fantastic, the passionate, and the naïve’.⁶⁸ Their display of ‘silly or extravagant content and rich form’, containing ‘a large element of artifice’ in their various roles and guises, is the passionate exuberance and ‘love of the exaggerated, the “off”, of things-being-what-they-are-not’.⁶⁹ The Russian attempt is, beat for beat, camp as ‘a mode of seduction – one which employs flamboyant mannerisms susceptible of a double interpretation; gestures full of duplicity, with a witty meaning for cognoscenti and another, more impersonal, for outsiders’.⁷⁰ The pageant of the Nine Worthies, on the other hand, is camp’s manner of plainly making frivolous ‘the pantheon of high culture: truth, beauty, and seriousness’, that which scholars should hold near and sacred.⁷¹ Both enact ‘[t]he ultimate camp statement: it’s good *because* it’s awful’.⁷²

Recalling what was earlier discussed of Early Modern pedagogy, it is notable that both comedy acts are, indeed, acts. These impersonating performances pointedly shun ‘Latin poetry and rare wines and velvet jackets’ – things more appropriate for the ‘overbred’ dandy, according to Sontag – and engage instead in ‘the coarsest, commonest pleasures, in the arts of the masses’.⁷³ Yet, while the ‘lover of camp appreciates vulgarity’, our camp scholars – crucially – do so in full embrace of the fact that ‘the history of camp taste is the history of snob taste’.⁷⁴ Through the Nine Worthies especially, they merge the lowbrow and the highbrow, the scholar and the anti-scholastic, the word and the world. If ‘[t]he experiences of Camp are based on the great discovery

⁶⁶Menon, ‘The L Words’ 190.

⁶⁷Cf. Halberstam, 5, 106.

⁶⁸Sontag, ‘Notes on Camp’, 283.

⁶⁹Ibid., 278–9.

⁷⁰Ibid., 281.

⁷¹Sontag, ‘Notes on Camp’, 286.

⁷²Ibid., 292.

⁷³Ibid., 289. On the dandy: the 18th century transitional ‘macaroni’ figure is certainly intriguing.

⁷⁴Ibid., 289–90.

that the sensibility of high culture has no monopoly upon refinement', it is then on the camp scholar's shoulders to both identify the refined and, in the same motion, severely undercut it.⁷⁵

The camp scholar, then, is *LLL*'s response out of the dichotomy this essay has been discussing. Due to what Chantal Zabus describes as 'camp's transvestitic capacity to assimilate dominant culture',⁷⁶ the sensibility not only assumes a 'disengaged, depoliticized' manner but becomes a third camp for one who can be neither sworn scholar-in-earnest nor a genuinely 'good member of the commonwealth' (4.2.84).⁷⁷ The play's scholar-figure, then, is neither genuine *aristos* nor genuine *hoi polloi* – but one *and* the other assumed transvestitically, in disguise, with no essential being(-earnest). After all, as Sontag writes elsewhere on style, 'our manner of appearing is our manner of being. The mask is the face'.⁷⁸ Conjoining this with the style of speaking (and speaking *as style*) through *LLL*'s entirety, or with the costumed *acts* of the Russians and the Nine Worthies, it becomes clear that the scholars' ridiculous being is really only a role; or, put otherwise, its ridiculous role is really its very being.

In this light, then, camp is thus also 'a solvent of morality. It neutralizes moral indignation, sponsors playfulness', and leads the scholar out of either becoming a useless laughing stock or betraying his oaths. In its powers of dissolution, camp is an artfulness, one that 'proposes to take itself seriously, but [which] cannot be taken altogether seriously because it is [wilfully] "too much"'.⁷⁹ In the unsatisfactory contradictions still present in the Spring and Winter songs, which maintain the tension rather than dissolve it, it is the Russian and Nine Worthies acts that emerge as the proper response to the scholar problem, and Marcadè's intrusion is thus as problematic, if not now more, than it has always been: it bans the camp and saves tragedy from the mouth of comedy.

Marcadè is a thought-provoking figure, embodying the very failure of the play, just as the songs do, to fully endorse the campness it requires. Despite the raucous laughter, it is hard to sand away a certain pang of failure sharpened by this death that buries the mirth of the two preceding mise-en-abymic performances. After all, to talk about the camp (non-)being of the unserious scholar and the serious mocker involves thinking in terms of a self-defeat wherein one fails to be either highbrow or lowbrow, a thought so artfully contained in the aphorism 'jack of all trades, master of none'. Berowne, in all his unsteady, performative wavering and lack of authentic essence, becomes second-rate scholar and second-rate lover both, and this is the epitome of

⁷⁵Ibid., 291.

⁷⁶Zabus, 'Against the *Straightgeist*', 282.

⁷⁷Sontag, 'Notes on Camp', 277.

⁷⁸Sontag, 'On Style', 18. The echoes of the Wildean mask enriches the points made here, and Sontag's statement is unconsciously echoed, almost word for word, when Carroll notes of the Muscovite scene that 'the mask and the face [...] are identified by the same word; "damask"' (*Great Feast*, 77).

⁷⁹Sontag, 'Notes on Camp', 284.

failure: felt more acutely not when one comes last in the race, but when coming in second. Berowne, fantastic and stunning, ultimately fails to achieve anything.

Camp scholarliness thus emerges as one of those ‘ways of being and knowing that stand outside of conventional understandings of success’.⁸⁰ Halberstam adds that ‘[f]ailing is something queers do and have always done exceptionally well; for queers failure can be a *style* [...] or a *way of life*’ – much a part of camp, then – but ‘failure is also unbeing’, a ‘mode of unbeing and unbecoming [which] propose[s] a different relation to knowledge’.⁸¹ This different relation, where not success but *failure* enables us to think of ‘existing alternatives to hegemonic systems’ (such as cloistered academia), is very much called for in a play that is not only *about* failure, but is one itself.⁸²

As Adhar Noor Desai notes, *LLL* is a text ‘to be read as fundamentally ‘unfinished’’, failing from beginning to end: starting from a title page which ‘lays bare the false starts the play underwent’, to the lords’ anxieties about their writing abilities and their repeated ‘fail[ure] to make a good impression’, to the play’s culmination of ‘cascading failures of performance’.⁸³ Even the ‘sub-plot reproductive triangle [between Costard, Jacquenetta, and Armado] fails to resolve’.⁸⁴ The ending, as has been seen, is a mere ‘failure that does not turn into a conclusion’, and thus ‘the play itself fails [even] on the level of genre’.⁸⁵

There is one figure who, in this entire essay, has by glaring omission not been named: a figure who is not successful and who consistently fails to have a stable identity, being always performative and in-between-being; who is both a second-rate scholar and a second-rate illiterate; who hates and loves scholars; a heretic who operates not without belief but with several wrong ones; a figure both stupid and smart. This figure is: ‘the student’.

In many ways, however, we have been discussing this figure all along, for, as Keilen very importantly notes, ‘scholars’ ‘is a word that tends to mean “students” for [Shakespeare] but “faculty” for us’.⁸⁶ The high scholars of *LLL*, after all, set out to learn, not teach, and their anxieties and limerence are testament to studentship much more than mastery.

This trope of the student, for Desai and others, can reflect this productive failure inherent to *LLL* better than any other liminal figure. In a powerful echo of Halberstam’s thesis, Desai writes that we ask our students ‘to write not because they already know, but because they wish to know. If that process entails failure, we might better understand failure as generative rather than terminal’.⁸⁷ Much against the disciplinarian nature of Early

⁸⁰Halberstam, 2.

⁸¹Ibid., 3, 23. (My italics).

⁸²Ibid., 89.

⁸³Desai, 202, 209, 221.

⁸⁴Billing, ‘Queer Language of Size’, 103.

⁸⁵Desai, 228, 202.

⁸⁶Keilen, 142.

⁸⁷Desai, 234. Cf. Zucker 116-118.

Modern pedagogy, then, *LLL*'s queer, creative failure points us towards 'alternatives within an undisciplined zone of knowledge production'.⁸⁸ This does not mean no curricula, no assessments, and no accountability, but it does remove the authoritative/authoritarian figure of the earnest, all-too-serious, beating, un-camp schoolmaster. 'The revised image of failure offered by Shakespeare [...] requires professors to reckon with the limitations of their own hard-won expertise', and in so doing 'can help us conceive a critical [...] pedagogy that requires students and teachers, readers and writers, and actors and audiences to construct an environment wherein failure is seen not as a conclusion but as a prompt for further conversation', consequently fostering 'a spirit of genuine collaboration between teachers and students'.⁸⁹

This does much to unseat the academy's perceived 'core values: desire for authority, fear of change, and aggression towards women'.⁹⁰ *LLL*, as a 'self-consciously failed text' that is 'more responsive, and potentially more creative, because [of] a potential breakdown', seriously resists scholarship contemporarily envisioned as an unfunny 'desire for authority and fame, [...] malicious criticism about the vanities and follies of other people, and a lack of a sense of humour about oneself'.⁹¹ *LLL* asks us, as scholars, 'to explicate the process of explication, to teach us about ourselves as teachers, to assess our poetics of cognitive assessment, and to humanize education as a communal human process'; in turn, this may allow us to survive a historical period which 'wants desperately to fracture the educational commune, to render it terrifying with automatic weapons, to drive wedges, violently, between teachers and students, between schools and families, between scholar and scholar, and most of all between learning and radical hopes'.⁹²

The word 'radical' should not here stimulate any thoughts of anachronism when it comes to envisioning such pedagogy. Daniel Blank's *Shakespeare and University Drama*, which follows the inter-pollination between commercial and academic dramatic works in the late sixteenth century, examines the ways in which 'professional dramatists [such as Shakespeare] were beginning to take a serious interest in their academic counterparts'.⁹³ One of the key ways in which the gated park of academe (specifically Oxford) was opened to the world of non-scholars is through the students and their plays. These plays functioned also as 'reflections – at times critical reflections' – of 'the perpetual inwardness of academic discourse' and of universities that were not exactly 'welcoming or inclusive spaces'.⁹⁴ The university stage, even then, 'gave students a means to question the institutional structures surrounding

⁸⁸Halberstam, 15.

⁸⁹Desai, 203-05.

⁹⁰Keilen, 164.

⁹¹Desai, 220; Keilen, 156.

⁹²Zucker, 20.

⁹³Blank, *Shakespeare and University Drama*, 37.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 5, 7.

them – and to escape the strict [non-]identities prescribed for them’.⁹⁵ As such, it is through students that circumscribed zones of knowledge were disrupted and alternatives, like Shakespeare’s ‘unlearned’ plays, were brought in and began to receive academic attention. Up-and-coming student drama, then, ‘was not only depicting more outward-facing universities’, but was ‘also a major force in making them so’.⁹⁶ In this light, *LLL* foregrounds that we pedants are ourselves ‘unlearned but still understanding subjects’, just as our students are, and we may move ‘toward a future landscape of shared pleasurable knowledge’ with students who, like Berowne, fail with passion and love.⁹⁷

One will have realised by now that eponymous love has been central in understanding the scholar’s campness and failures; after all, ‘[c]amp taste is a kind of love, love for human nature’, and the lords and ladies were conjoint in trickery, joy, and love.⁹⁸ This is not necessarily heterosexual, romantic love (nor necessarily exclusive of it). It is love’s labour as camp, celebrating instead of banishing the schism between scholarly and anti-scholarly, living within it, and gradually dissolving the antagonistic idea that we must ‘either immerse ourselves in the [play’s] verbal texture or gradually come to distrust it’.⁹⁹ Here is not the Pygmalion-esque wish, as Enterline reads in *The Winter’s Tale*, wherein love transforms us from simulacrum to truth. Rather, this is inverted into a conceit still entirely Shakespearean in essence (especially in his sonnets): genuine love celebrating the falsity of camp.¹⁰⁰ Camp’s simultaneously mock-serious rejection of love, and its seriously mocking assumption, reaches its most obvious climax in Costard’s ‘honorofic-abilitudininitibus’ as that which ‘invit[es] all kinds of people, learned and unlearned, to laugh at its thirteen syllables’ (5.1.36).¹⁰¹ Funny to non-scholars, students, and teachers alike, an emphasis on the sound of a word (surface) rather than its meaning (depth) is an apex expression of camp’s disruption of binaries and its failure to win any sort of argument; that is, to sustain any sort of ‘verbal self-assuredness and unilateral social discourse’.¹⁰² This result is not necessarily ‘successful’, just unforeseen: it is in the students’ futures rather than ours. Thus ‘Berowne [...] shows what would be gained by approaching academic life as conversation, in which all participants have the right to speak and propose new ways of using shared language’.¹⁰³ As Zucker writes, with some hope, ‘[t]he encounter with strange language can have strange effects’.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁵Blank, 8.

⁹⁶Ibid., 43.

⁹⁷Zucker, 84, 57.

⁹⁸Sontag, ‘Notes on Camp’, 288.

⁹⁹Wood, p. 212.

¹⁰⁰See Enterline, *Rhetoric of the Body*, esp. the last chapter.

¹⁰¹Zucker, 96.

¹⁰²Desai, 205.

¹⁰³Keilen, 150.

¹⁰⁴Zucker, 107.

Ultimately, while ‘Shakespeare was not the first to see scholars as futile (comic) persons’, *LLL* is one of the foremost examples of English literature that stresses the trappings of identity of scholars, represented across literature and literary periods as alternately ‘sexless, tedious’ and wintry, or ‘passionate, devoted heroes of the invisible life, the life of the mind’.¹⁰⁵ If Sontag writes that ‘[c]amp is the answer to the problem: how to be a dandy in the age of mass culture’, then Shakespeare’s presentation of camp offers an answer to the problem: how to be a scholar in the age of mass populism. After all, the present ‘[i]nterpretation [of *LLL*] must itself be evaluated’, as Sontag writes, ‘within a historical view of human consciousness’.¹⁰⁶ It is inevitable, then, that *LLL* is read in the present manner at our particular (and precarious) point in history, that is, as an exemplary account of what Zucker describes as ‘the failures of [earnest] scholarliness’, lacking self-reflection in ‘our moment’s rising fascism that ridicules scholarly labor and attempts to silence it in the name of its own white power’.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, and importantly, it goes the other way in ‘mak[ing] room for relations of stupidity in the workings of scholarly, learned authority’.¹⁰⁸ Shakespeare’s answer to the contemporary scholar, as interpreted here beyond contemporary culture’s gnashing of teeth (right against left, up against down), is that if one is to assume the being of ‘scholar’ – a role so historically laden with intellectual, class, and gender privileges, and which ‘the masses’ are more than right to dispute – one might do worse than assume this identity only in the ironic, disguised, and queer manner of camp. And this with all its wonderful failings.

The role of scholar should not, then, be viewed as either ‘personal’ – earnest love – or ‘impersonal’ – embarrassed distance – but rather as a role to be ‘impersonated’: ironically, queerly, and with love. If the play’s barbative powers come, as Meredith Anne Skura notes, from ‘the way it teases its offstage aristocratic audience’, it simultaneously ‘invit[es] their complicity’ in not taking themselves seriously.¹⁰⁹ Contrary to the prevailing opinion that the play’s ‘little action and sometimes excessive and now impenetrable allusions have signalled its significance limited to contemporary satire or [...] to issues now irrelevant’, *LLL* has, in truth, deep connections with today’s renewed political rhetoric and its deployment against those that revel in it – experts, academics, and the scholar-student more generally.¹¹⁰ Let us all be students.

¹⁰⁵Nuttall, *Dead from the Waist Down*, 7, ix. Cf. Zucker: ‘*Love’s Labour’s Lost* is a central comedy in the Shakespeare canon and a text that has shaped the reception of the pedant figure in English language culture for centuries’ (85).

¹⁰⁶Sontag, ‘Against Interpretation’, 7.

¹⁰⁷Zucker, xiii.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁰⁹Skura, ‘Player as Clown’, 320.

¹¹⁰Wood, 211.

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