To: "Schemers, Plotters, or Conspirators?" Workshop Participants

From: Vanessa Rapatz, Kyle Pivetti, and John Garrison

Re: Workshop Description, Discussion Questions and Pre-Workshop Readings

Welcome! We look forward to working with you at the upcoming Attending to Early Modern Women conference.

Workshop Overview
This workshop explores depictions of female collaboration in early modern literature. Broadly defined, "collaboration" here includes any situation in which women work together for a desired end. Yet we will focus on female alliances where the work itself is kept secret from others and/or where the desired outcome of the work is kept secret.

Women’s work, we propose, already has embedded within it the threats that it will undermine or call into question male power structures. Our discussions will address the following questions: How does early modern literature reflect anxieties about women working in groups both with and without surveillance? How do women’s alliances operate in political contexts, whether depicted in a Shakespeare play or in accounts of historical events? When does the threat of conspiracy legitimate masculine conceptions of both nationhood and national history, and what is the place of “women’s work” in these political unions? How do groups of women undermine or cohere heterosexual unions or male homosocial bonding? When does a conspiracy begin, and when does the accusation of conspiracy in fact create a subculture? We intend, finally, to explore the implications of clandestine female community for the imaginations of an early modern English or French society struggling to create itself.

This workshop encourages interdisciplinary perspectives. We invite participants from a range of disciplines (e.g., history, economics, literature) and a range of approaches (e.g., feminist, queer theory, performance studies) Central to our discussion will be a consideration of evidence and the degree to which conspiracy can be identified, or perhaps only imagined.

Discussion Questions
Participants should submit a maximum of two discussion questions prior to convening at the conference. These discussion questions might raise further lines of inquiry into the assigned readings, suggest connections to the ongoing research of participants, or open up exchanges with other workshop themes. These questions will provide a road map to guide us through first the literary material and second the historical episodes. Please send your discussion questions to John Garrison (jgarriso@carrollu.edu).
Pre-Circulated Readings
Prior to convening, please read the material collected here:

- The Oxford English Dictionary entry for "conspire"
- Quotation from Cardinal Richelieu regarding women
- Excerpt from Act I, Scene 10 of Molière's The Imaginary Invalid

Note: Prior exposure to the historical figures or plays in the list above is not needed for the workshop!

Organizers

Vanessa Rapatz is a lecturer at the University of California, Davis. She is currently examining depictions of convents and novices in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature. Email: vlrapatz@ucdavis.edu

Kyle Pivetti is a lecturer at Saint John's University and is finalizing a book manuscript focusing on the relationships between memory and nationhood in early modern England. Email: kpivetti@csbsju.edu

John Garrison is an Assistant Professor at Carroll University. His current research explores the economic aspects of friendship in early modern literature. Email: jgarriso@carrollu.edu
Schemers, Plotters, or Conspirators?: Navigating Representations of Early Modern Female Collaboration

1. **OED, EXCERPT FROM ENTRY FOR "CONSPIRE"

conspire, v.

Etymology: < French conspire-r (15th cent. in Littré) (= Provençal oospirer, Spanish conspirar, Italian conspire), < Latin conspirare lit. ‘to breathe together’, whence, ‘to accord, harmonize, agree, combine or unite in a purpose, plot mischief together secretly’.

1.

a. *intr.* To combine privily for an evil or unlawful purpose; to agree together to do something criminal, illegal, or reprehensible (*esp.* to commit treason or murder, excite sedition, etc.); to plot. Const. with, against, to do something, †that.

1382 *Bible (Wycliffite, E.V.)*, John ix. 22 The lewes hadden conspirid, that if any man knowlechide him Crist, he schulde be don out of the synagoge.

1386 *Chaucer, The *Pr*incess's *Ta*le* 113 The lewes have conspirid This innocent out of this world to enchace.

†b. Said of a single person (the notion of combination being lost sight of): To plot secretly, contrive. *Obs.*

1393 *J. Gower, Confessio Amantis* I. 232 Within his herte he gan conspire.

1500 *Lyfe Roberto *Dayyl* 612 in W. C. Hazlitt *Remains Early Pop. Poetry Eng.* (1864) I. 243 Thus then he conspired in hys wyll, One after another for to kyll.

1609 *Shakespeare, Sonnets* x. sig. B3, For thou art so possess with murdrous hate, That gainst thy selfe thou stikkst not to conspire.

1609 *Shakespeare, Troilus & Cressida* v. i. 60 But to bee Menelaus, I would conspire against desteny.

2. *trans.* To plot, plan, devise, contrive (a criminal, evil, or hostile action).

a. *with the end or purpose as obj.*

1362 *Langland, *Piers Plowman* A. xi. 19 Dat conterfete childe and Conspiret wronges.

1377 *Langland, *Piers Plowman* B. x. 423 Davd þat Art Vries heth conspired.


1597 S. Daniel *Cymbeline* v. i, The whilst victorious Henry did conspire The wracke of Fraunce.
b. with the action as *obj.*
1503–4 *Act 19 Hen. VII* c. 34 Preamb., By dyvers feelis betwen theym consevyd and conspired.
1579 G. Fenton tr. F. Guicciardini *Hist. Guicciardin* i. 8 Conspire against him many daungerous enterprises.

†c. *pass.* with clause. *Obs.*

1393 J. Gower *Confessio Amandis* I. 81 Sinon, whiche made was here espie Withinne Troie, as was conspired.
1485 *Digby Myst.* (1882) ii. 486 Yt ys conspyryd to reward thy falsnes.

3.

a. *intr.* To combine in action or aim; to act in purposive combination, union, or harmony.
a1538 T. Starkey *Dial. Pole & Lepers* (1889) 13 The cyylye lyfe ys a polytyke ordur of men conspyryng togyddur in vertue & honesty.
1596 W. Lambarde *Perambulation of Kent* (rev. ed.) 264 The · · · Stoure, · · · assisted with other streames that conspire with it.
1656 J. Smith *Myst. Rhetorique* 350 Therefore must your labour conspire with my inventions.

b. To combine, concur, co-operate as by intention (so as to effect a certain result). It ranges from what is explicitly *fig.* of 1 to a sense quite distinct from it.

1575 R. Laneham *Let.* (1871) 43 Consider, how fully the Gods (az it seemed) had conspyred · · · too bestow theyr influencez & gyfts vpon her coourt.
1651 T. Hobbes *Leviathan* (1839) 376 The writers · · · conspire to one and the same end, which is setting forth of the rights of the kingdom of God.

†4. To concur or agree in spirit, sentiment, sense, tenor, testimony, assertion, etc. *Obs.*
1579 E. K. in Spenser *Shepheardes Cal.* Oct. 21 Gloss. This place semeth to conspyre with Plato.
a1620 M. Fotherby *Athoumstic* (1622) ii. i. §9. 197 The Apostle · · · doth fully conspire and agree with the Prophet.

†5. *trans.* To unite in producing; to concur to.

1614 S. Purchas *Pilgrimage* (ed. 2) vii. x. 702 Their blacke skinnes, white eyes, and cauterised markes seem to conspire a dreadfull and gallyy deformeitt in their faces.
1650 R. Baxter *Saints Everlasting Rest* (1662) i. vii. 104 All things · · · with us conspire the high praises of our great Deliverer.

6. It occurs with some reference to the etymological sense ‘breathe or blow together’, though scarcely as an independent meaning.
a1485 *Digby Myst.* (1882) ii. 23 Saule ys my name · · · whych conspyreth the dyscyplys with thretes and menaces [cf. *Acts* ix. 1].
2. Cardinal Richelieu on Women, 1630.

From this it follows that women, by their nature indolent and unable to keep secrets, are little suited to government, particularly if one also considers that they are subject to their emotions and consequently little susceptible to reason and justice, attributes which should exclude them from all public office. . . . Their weakness denies them the masculine vigor necessary to public administration, and it is almost impossible for them to govern without a base exploitation of their sex, or without acts of injustice and cruelty arising from the disorderly ascendency of their emotions.


3. Excerpt from Moliere's The Imaginary Invalid (1673)

Plot Summary (from NYU LitMed Database)

Argan, a fearful but miserly hypochondriac, divides his time between summoning the doctor to care for his ills and trying not to settle the resultant bills. He resolves to marry his daughter, Angélique, to a medical student, hoping to acquire unlimited access to gratis consultation. The chosen fiancé is an unattractive dolt, who would never interest Angélique, even if she were not already in love with clever, handsome Cléante, who poses as her music instructor.

Argan's wife, however, plans to send Angélique to a convent, removing her from the line of inheritance. At the urging of the sensible servant Toinette, he feigns death to test his wife's affection only to discover her contempt. Again with the help of Toinette, the young lovers convince Argan to liberate himself from the twin tyrannies of his ailing body and his grasping physicians by becoming his own doctor. The play closes with the physicians' lively examination of Argan and his entry into the profession, full of musical pomp and pidgin Latin.

Act I, Scene 10.—ANGELIQUE, TOINETTE.

TOINETTE. They are shut up with the notary, and I heard something about a will; your mother-in-law doesn't go to sleep; it is, no doubt, some conspiracy of hers against your interests to which she is urging your father.

ANGELIQUE. Let him dispose of his money as he likes, as long as he does not dispose of my heart in the same way. You see, Toinette, to what violence it is subjected. Do not forsake me, I beseech you, in this my extremity.

TOINETTE. I forsake you! I had rather die. In vain does your stepmother try to take me into her confidence, and make me espouse her interests. I never could like her, and I have always been on your side. Trust me, I will do everything to serve you. But, in order to serve you more effectually, I shall change my tactics, hide my wish to help you, and affect to enter into the feelings of your father and your stepmother.

ANGELIQUE. Try, I beseech you, to let Cleante know about the marriage they have decided upon.
TOINETTE. I have nobody to employ for that duty but the old usurer Punchinello, my lover; it will cost me a few honeyed words, which I am most willing to spend for you. To-day it is too late for that, but to-morrow morning early I will send for him, and he will be delighted to...

ACT I, SCENE XI

TOINETTE. (to ANGELIQUE). I am called away. Good night. Trust me.
Love's Labor's Lost

[DRAMATIS PERSONAE]

Ferdinand, King of Navarre
Berowne, Longaville, and Duainne
Jovian
Quince
Costard, a clown
Moth, page to Armand
Forester

The Princess of France
Rosaline
Maria
Katherine
Jaquenetta, a country wench

Lords, Attendants, etc.

Scene: Navarre

[ACT I, SCENE I]

[Enter Ferdinand, King of Navarre, Berowne, Longaville, and Duainne.]

Ferd. Let fame, that all hast after in their lives, live regist'red upon our brazen tombs, and then grace us in the disgrace of death; When spite of corporeal devouring Time, Thy endeavor of this present breath may buy That honor which shall bathe his seythe's keen edge, And make us heirs of all eternity. Therefore, brave conquerors—for so you are, That war against your own affections And the huge army of the world's desires— Our late edict shall strongly stand in force: Square shall be the wonder of the world; Our court shall be a little academe, 10 And contemplative in living art. As three, Berowne, Duainne, and Longaville, Have sworn for three years' term to live with me, My fellow scholars, and to keep those statutes

That are recorded in this schedule here. Your oaths are pass'd, and now subscribe your names, That his own hand may strike his honor down That violates the smallest branch herein. If you are arm'd to do, as sworn to do, Subscribe to your deep oaths, and keep it too.

Long. I am resolved, 'tis but a three years' fast: The mind shall banquet, though the body pine; 20 Fat paunches have lean pates; and dainty bits Make rich the ribs, but bankrupt quite the wit.

Dem. My loving lord, Dumeain is mortified: The grosser manner of these world's delights He throws upon the gross world's baser slaves; To love, to wealth, to pomp, I pine and die, With all these living in philosophy.

Ber. I can but say their protestation over: So much, dear liege, I have already sworn, That is, to live and study here three years. 30 But there are other strict observances: As not to see a woman in that term, Which I hope well is not enrolled there; And one day in a week to touch no food, And but one meal on every day beside, 40 The which I hope is not enrolled there; And then to sleep but three hours in the night, And not be seen to wink of all the day—

18. schedule: document. 19. pass'd: pledged. 22. arm'd: prepared (the martial imagery of lines 8–10). 27. bankrupt: bankrupt (a variant form). 28. mortified: dead to worldly pleasures. 32. With...living: I.e. finding a substitute for love, wealth, and pomp (?) or living with these companions (?). 34. liege: sovereign. 43. wince of: close the eyes during.
When I was wont to think no harm all night, 46
And make a dark night too of half the day—
Which I hope well is not enrolled there.
O, these are barren tasks, too hard to keep,
Not to see ladies, study, fast, not sleep.
King. Your oath is pass’d to pass away from these.
Ber. Let me say no, my liege, and if you please:
I only swore to study with your Grace, 51
And stay here in your court for three years’ space.
Long. You swore to that, Berowne, and to the rest.
Ber. By yea and nay, sir, then I swore in jest.
What is the end of study, let me know. 55
King. Why, that to know which else we should not know.
Ber. Things hid and bard’d (you mean) from common sense.
King. Ay, that is study’s godlike recompence.
Ber. Coin’ on thon, I will swear to study so,
To know the thing I am forbid to know: 60
As thus—to study where I well may dine,
When I to feast express am forbid;
Or study where to meet some mistress fine,
When mistresses from common sense are hid;
Or having sworn too hard—keeping oath,
Study to break it and not break my troth.
If study’s gain be thus, and this be so,
Study can I do it, and I will ne’er say no.
King. These be the stops that hinder study quite,
And train our intellects to vain delight. 71
Ber. Why? all delights are vain, but that most vain
Which, with pain purchas’d, doth inherit pain:
As, painfully to pore upon a book
To seek the light of truth, while truth the while 75
Doth falsely blind the eyesight of his look.
Light, seeking light, doth light of light beguile;
So ere you find where light in darkness lies,
Your light grows dark by losing of your eyes.
Study me how to please the eye indeed
By fixing it upon a fairer eye,
Who dazzling so, that eye shall be his heed,
And give him light that it was blinded by.
Study is like the heaven’s glorious sun,
That will not be deep search’d with saucy looks;
Small have continual plodders ever won,
Save base authority from others’ books.

These earthly godfathers of heaven’s lights,
That give a name to every fixed star,
Have no more profit of their shining night
Than those that walk and wot not what they are.
Too much to know is to know nought but fame;
And every godfather can give a name.
King. How well he’s read, to reason against reading!
Dum. Proceeded well, to stop all good proceeding!
Long. He weeds the corn and still lets grow the weeding.
Ber. The spring is near when green geese are a-breading.
Dum. How follows that?
Ber. In reason nothing.
Ber. Something then in rhyme.
King. Berowne is like an envious snapping frost
That bites the first-born infants of the spring. 101
Ber. Well, say I am, why should proud summer boast:
Before the birds have any cause to sing?
Why should I joy in any abortive birth?
At Christmas I no more desire a rose
Than wish a snow in May’s new-fangled shows;
But like of each thing that in season grows.
So you, to study now it is too late,
Climb o’er the house to unlock the little gate.
King. Well, sit you out; go home, Berowne; adieu.
Ber. No, my good lord, I have sworn to stay with you;
And though I have for barbarism spoke more
Than for that angel knowledge you can say,
Yet, confident, I’ll keep what I have sworn,
And abide the penance of each three years’ day. 111
Give me the paper, let me read the same,
And to the strictest decree I’ll write my name.
King. How well this yielding rescues thee from shame!
Ber. [Reads.] “Item, That no woman shall come within a mile of my court”—Hath this been proclaim’d?
Long. Four days ago.
Ber. Let’s see the penalty. [Reads.] “—on pain of losing her tongue.” Who devis’d this penalty?
Long. Marry, that did I.

44. think no harm: i.e. sleep soundly.
47. barren: dull, fruitless.
55. and it: 6.
58. By... may: (1) most earnestly (a common meaning, derived from Matthew 5:33-37); (2) equivocally, ambiguously.
59. common sense: ordinary perception.
60. Coin’ on: This, the quarto spelling, stresses the pun on common sense (line 57).
62. paint: (1) labor; (2) suffering, purchase’d: obtained. inherit: possession.
65. Light... beguile: the eye, seeking enlightenment, deprives itself of the power to see, i.e. excessive study frustrates the search for truth by making the student blind.
66. study: 67. study rather (as far as I am concerned).
68. a fairer eye: i.e. a sweetheart.
69. Wha... fairest: i.e. the man (who has fixed his eye “upon a fairest eye”) being thus dazzled.
73. see: i.e. his eye.
86. Small: Hilit.
87. base: commonplace (because secondhand).
88. earthly godfathers: i.e. astronomers, who give names to stars as godparents give names to children at baptism.
91. wait know.
92. liable: hearst, secondhand information.
95. Proceeded: advanced in a course of study (tax academic term).
96. Ber. reading: he is the ‘young white wheat and leaves the weeds.’
97. geese: goslings, gosling, ready for sale about Whitsunfeast; here simplistic geese, young geese.
98. rhymed. Berowne cautions Dumain’s statement with a quibbling reference to the proverbial “neither rhyme nor reason.”
100. envious malicious; sniping; nipping.
101. infant: babe. 102. proud: splendid.
103. I’ll do: am pleased with.
109. Climb... gates: i.e. act without any sense of fitness, behave incongruously.
110. sit you out: don’t take part (a term from cardplaying).
112. barbarism: ignorance, lack of culture.
113. head: a day: endure the hardships of each day of the three years.
119. Item: word preceding each part of a list or enumeration.
125. Marry: indeed (a weakened oath, “by the Virgin Mary”).
his great limb or joint) shall pass Pompey the Great; 119 

Pardon, sir, error: he is not quantity enough for that Worthy’s thumb, he is not so big as the end of his club.

Shall I have audience? He shall present 134 

Hercules in minority; his enter and exit shall be straining a snake; and I will have an apology for

That is the way to make an offense gracious, though few have the grace to do it.

For the rest of the Worthies, I will live three myself.

Three worthy gentleman! I shall tell you a thing?

We attend.

I will have, if this judge not, an antes.

I beseech you follow.

Yea, good man Dull! thou hast spoken no word all this while.

Dull. Not understood none neither, sir.

[Alack!] we will employ thee.

I’ll make one in a dance, or so; or I will play

On the labor to the Worthies, and let them dance the hay.

Most dull, honest Dull! to our sport! away!

Extant.

[SCENE II]

Enter the Letter: [the PRINCESS, MARIA, KATHERINE, and ROSALINE].

Prin. Sweet hearts, we shall be rich ere we depart.

If feasting come thus plentifully in.

A lady wall’d about with diamonds!

Look what you have from the loving King.

Ros. Madam, came nothing else along with it?

Prin. Nothing but this? Yes, as much love in rhyme

As would be cramm’d up in a sheath of paper.

Write a’ both sides the leaf, margent all and that

What was his name to seal on Cupid’s name.

That was the way to make his head gay.

For he hath been five thousand year a boy.

Kath. Ay, and a shrewd unhappy gallows too.

Ros. You’ll ne’er be friends with him, ‘a kill’d your sister.

Kath. He made him melancholy, sad, and heavy;

And so she died. Had she been light, like you, is

Of such a merry, nimble, stirring spirit,

She might ‘a been [a] grandam ere she died.

And so may you; for a light heart lives long.

Ros. What’s your dark meaning, mouse, of this light word?

Kath. A light condition in a beauty dark.

Ros. We need more light to find your meaning out.

Kath. You’ll mar the light by taking it in snuff;

Therefore I’ll darkly end the argument.

Ros. Look what you do, you do it still i’ th’

dark.

Kath. So do not you, for you are a light watch.

Ros. Indeed I weigh not you, and therefore light.

Kath. You weigh me not? O, that’s you care not

for me.

Ros. Great reason: for past care is still past
cure.

Prin. Well banded both, a set of wit well played.

But, Rosaline, you have a favor too?

Who sent it? and what is it?

Ros. I would you knew.

And if my face were but as fair as yours,

My favor were as great: be witness this.

Nay, I have verses too, I thank Berowne;

The numbers true, and, were the number’ning too,

I were the fairest goddess on the ground.

I am camp’d to twenty thousand fairs.

O, he hath drawn my picture in his letter!

Prin. Any thing like?

Ros. Much in the letters, nothing in the praise.

Prin. Beautious as ink—a good conclusion.


Waste pencils [his]! let me not die your

debtor,

My red dominical, my golden letter:

O that your face were not so full of O’s!

Prin. A pox of that jest! and I beshow all shrews.

12. shrewd: shrewd, i.e. evilly disposed (or perhaps here used adverbially, in the sense "grievously"). 13. unhappy: bringing bad luck.

14. gallows: know it to be hunged. 15. light: cheerful.

16. ‘a: have.

17. dark: obscure, hidden. 18. light: trivial, unimportant.


22. light: see. 23. that his: as much as you. (Katherine takes it in a different sense, which she explains.)


26. favor: love letter.

27. number: metro. 28. number’ning: estimate.

29. fair: beautiful women.

30. letters: pennmanship. 31. praise: i.e. content.

32. Beautious: as fair. 33. A jibe at Rosaline’s dark complexion.

34. text B: The text hand was one of the more formal of the Elizabethan styles of writing. Its use was, perhaps, to suggest novel.

35. waste pencils: i.e. beware this sketching of portraits with the finely pointed brushes used for make-up. set: debtor: i.e. love you once for that.

36. red dominical: the red letter used to mark Sundays on calendars. 37. The modern Latin name for Sunday was dies dominicae: golden letter. Also used to mark Sundays. Here used ubiquitously with reference to Katherine’s fair complexion.

38. G’s marks left by smallpox (hence the Princess’ next remark).

39. beshow all shrews: beshow (i.e. mish’te) all shrews.
51. translation: metaphor (a rhetorical term).
52. Vidi, wise, simplicity: foolishness (cf. line 78).
53. Ay, part. Meaning not clear; perhaps "Yes, may I never give one of my hands to a husband who can't be more generous."
54. In ... weeks: caught for good. 64. footlest: unswerving.
55. make him ... itself? make him dress himself splendidly to please me when I am only acting in jest.
56. part-taunt-like: i.e., holding the winning hand (from the same of a winning combination of cards in the game of post and pair).
57. saint Pingre. 82. saint Denis: patron saint of France.
58. charge: level (as a weapon).
"Prin. The effect of my intent is to cross theirs: They do it but in mockery merriment, And mock for mock is only my intent. Their several counsels they unsink shall To loves mistook, and so be mock’d withal Upon the next occasion that we meet, With visages display’d, to talk and grace. 144
Ros. But shall we dance, if they desire us to’t? Prin. No, to the death we will not move a foot, Nor to their penn’d speech render we no grace, But while this spoke each turn away [her] face. Broyet. Why; that contempt will kill the speaker’s heart, And quite divorce his memory from his part. 150
Prin. Therefore I do it, and I make no doubt The rest will [no’er] come in, if he be out. There’s no such sport as sport by sport estranged, To make theirs ours, and ours none but our own; So shall we stay, mocking intended game, 155 And they, well mock’d, depart away with shame. Sounded trumpet [within].
Broyet. The trumpeter sounds, be mask’d; the maskers come. [The Ladies mask.]
Enter BLACKMOORS with music, the Bay METHE with a speech, [the King] and the rise of the Lords disguised [asRussians].
Meth. "All hail, the richest beauties on the earth!"—
Broyet. Beauties no richer than rich taffata.
Meth. "A holy parcel of the fairest dames The Ladies turn their backs to him. That ever turn’d their—becks—to mortal views?"Ber. Their "eyes," villain, their "eyes."
Meth. "That [ever] turn’d their eyes to mortal views!"
Out—
Broyet. True, out indeed.
Meth. "Once to behold with your sun-beamed eyes, with your sun-beamed eyes!"—
Broyet. They will not answer to that epithet; You were best call it "daughter-beamed eyes."
Meth. "They do not mark me, and that brings me out. Ber. Is this your perfectness? Be gone, you rogue! [Exit Meth.]

Ros. What would these strangers? Know their minds, Boyet, 175 If they do speak our language, ’tis our will That some plain man recount their purposes.
Know what they would.
Ros. What would they, say they? 180
Broyet. Nothing but peace, and gentle visitation.
Ros. Why, that they have, and bid them so be gone.
Broyet. She says, you have it, and you may be gone.
King. Say to her we have measure’d many miles, To tread a measure with her on this grass, 183 Broyet. They say that they have measure’d many a mile To tread a measure with you on this grass.
Ros. It is not so. Ask them how many inches Is in one mile; if they have measured many, The measure then of one is easily told, 190 Broyet. If to come hither you have measure’d miles, And many miles, the Princess bids you tell How many inches dosh fill one mile.
Ber. Tell her, we measure them by weary steps. Broyet. She hears herself.
Ros. How many weary steps Of many weary miles you have o’ergone Are number’d in the travel of one mile? Ber. We number nothing that we spend for you; Our duty is so rich, so infinite, That we may do it still without acquireth. Vouchsafe to show the sunshine of your face, That we (like savages) may worship it. Ros. My face is but a moon, and clouded too.
King. Blessed are clouds, to do as such clouds do! Vouchsafe, bright moon, and these thy stars, to shine (Those clouds removed) upon our watery eye.
Ros. O vain petitioner! beg a greater matter, Thou now requests but moonshine in the water.
King. Then in our measure do but vouchsafe one change. Thou bid’st me beg; this begging is not strange. Ros. Play, music, then! Nay, you must do it soon. [Music plays.] Not yet; no dance: this change I like the moon.
King. Will you not dance? How come you thus extranged? Ros. You took the moon at full, but now she’s changed. 205
King. Yet still she is the moon, and I the man. The music plays, vouchsafe some motion to it. 210

Lover’s 177
Labor’s Last V.ii

[0071-0118]

139. mockery: mocking.
141. counsellors: private purposes, inmost thoughts.
146. To the death: as long as we live.
151. pass’d speech: speech written out with care.
152. out: put out of his part, i.e. confused.
155. stay: remain as visitors.
157. i.e. Blackmoors, black Africans.
167. daughter-beamed. Because they are women; (quibbling on sun and snow).
172. music: pay attention to. Brings me out; puts me off, makes me forget my lines.
174. your perfectness: i.e. the perfect mastery of your lines that you led us to expect.
177. plain: plain-spoken.
179. visitant: visit. 184. measure’d paced.
185. tread a measure: dance a stately dance.
200. accompt: reckoning.
203. a moon: i.e. not a sun (the king symbol proper to the real Princess), clouded: i.e. obscured by the mask. 206. eyes: eyes.
204. moonshine: water: i.e. nothing (proverbial).
209. change: (1) change of the moon; (2) round or figure in dancing.
210. not strange: not foreign (though done by a supposed foreigner).
215. man: i.e. man in the moon.
216. motion. Rosaline takes this in the sense “response.”

237
Ras. Our ears vouchsafe it.
King. Bat your legs should do it.
Ras. Since you are strangers, and come here by chance,
We'll not be nice; take hands. We will not dance.
King. Why take we hands then?
Ras. Only to part friends. 220
Curtey, sweet hearts—and so the measure ends.
King. More measure of this measure; be not nice.
Ras. We can afford no more at such a price.
King. Price you yourselves; what buys your company?
Ras. Your absence only.
King. That can never be. 235
Ras. Then cannot we be bought; and so, adieu—
Twice to your visor, and half once to you.
King. If you deny to dance, let's hold more chat.
Ras. In private then.
King. I am best pleas'd with that. [They converse apart.]
Ber. White-handed mistress, one sweet word with thee. 230
Prin. Honey, and milk, and sugar: there is three.
Ber. Nay then two treys, and if you grow so nice,
Meth'lin, wort, and malmsay; well run, dice!
There's half a dozen sweats.
Prin. Seventh sweet, adieu.
Since you can cog, I'll play no more with you. 235
Ber. One word in secret.
Prin. Let it not be sweet.
Ber. Thou grievest my gall.
Prin. Gall! bitter.
Ber. Therefore meet. [They converse apart.]
Dunn. Will you vouchsafe me with to change a word?
Mar. Name it.
Dunn. Fair lady—
Mar. Say you so? Fair lady—
Take that for your fair lady.
Dunn. Please it you. 240
As much in private, and I'll bid adieu.
[They converse apart.]
Kath. What, was your vizard made without a tongue?
Lang. I know the reason, lady, why you ask.
Kath. O for your reason quickly, sir, I long!
Lang. You have a double tongue within your mask. 245
And would afford my speechless vizard half.

222. More measures: a larger amount.
227. vizard: mask. The line has not been satisfactorily explained.
228. deny refuse. 229. treys: threys. nice: subtle.
235. cog: cheat.
237. Thou — endings; you are causing me pain by chafing a sore place (but the Princess picks up gall in the sense of "bile"—cf. "bitter as gall"), meet: fitting.
242. vizards: mask. tengan, W. J. Lawrence, in the Times Literary Supplement, June 7, 1923, explained that Elizabethan masks were kept in place by a tonger, or interior projection, held in the mouth.
245. double: With play on the sense "ambiguous, deceptious.
247. Yeal, the Dutchman's pronunciation of "well", or the German viel (much). In addition to calling Longaville a calf, Katherine may
Kath. "Yeal," quoth the Dutchman. Is not a calf what is a calf, fair lady!
Long. A calf! fair lady! 230
Kath. No, a fair lord calf.
Long. Let's part the word.
[They converse apart.]
Kath. No, I'll not be your half.
Take all and wean it, it may prove a ox. 240
Long. Look how you butt yourself in these sharp mock's!
Will you give burns, chaste lady? Do not so.
[They converse apart.] Then die a calf, before your horns do grow.
Long. One word in private with you ere I die.
Kath. Bleat softly then, the butcher hears you cry.
[They converse apart.]
Bye'et. The tongues of mock'ing wench are as keen
As is the razor's edge invisible.
Cutting a smaller hair than may be seen;
Above the sense of sense, so sensible
Seemeth their conference, their conceits have wings
Fleeter than arrows, bullets, wind, thought, swift'er things. 230
Ras. Not one word more, my maids, break off, break off.
Ber. By heaven, all dry-beaten with pure scoff!
King. Farewell, mad wenchens, you have simple wits.
Exeunt [King, Lords, and Blackmore].
Prin. Twenty adieux, my frozen Muscovits. 235
Are these the breed of wits so wondered at?
Bye'et. Tapers they are, with your sweet breaths puff'd out.
Ras. Well-likeing wits they have—gross gross, fat fat.
Prin. O poverty in wit, king-like-poor flout! 240
Will they not (think you) hang themselves to-night?
Or ever in wizards show their faces?
This perr Berowne was out of count'nance quite.
Ras. They were all in lamentable cases!
The King was weeping-ripe for a good word. 245
Prin. Berowne did swear himself out of all suit.
Mar. Dumaine was at my service, and his sword:
"No point," quoth I, my servant straight was mute.
Kath. Lord Longaville said I came o'er his heart,
And trow you what he call'd me?
Prin. Quain, perhaps.

be running on self, i.e. the mask, and, in the combination of long (line 244) and run on Longaville's name.
249. part the word: divide the word calf? between us. Your half
(1) half of something of which you are the other half; (2) your better half, i.e. wife. 230. means: i.e. rules.
251. bet: injury (with play on the horns of the ox).
252. give burns: (1) attack with horns (developing the idea in butt); (2) make your husband a cuckold.
259. Above ... anise: beyond the power of sense to perceive. sensible: sensitive, quick-witted. 260. conference: conversation.
267. dry-run: to be run without soundly without bloodshed.
268. Well-likeing: plume.
269. king-like-poor flout: The Princess Jibes at Rosaline's pun on liking like a king and caps it by reversing the syllables of liking into king-like.
272. port: lively, brisk.
273. cases: (1) states: (2) costumes.
274. weeping-like fear: ready to weep for lack of... 275. eat ... with: past all propriety (with another play, perhaps, on costume). 277. No point. See note on line 140.
279. trow you: would you believe. Quain: i.e. heartburn. (Per-
ouced somewhat like come, and hence suggesting the Princess' "go" in the next line.)
Kath. Yes, in good faith.

Prin. Go, sickness as thou art!

Rex. Well, better wishe have worn plain statute-
caps.

But will you hear? the King is my love sworn.

Kath. And Queen Berowne hath plighted faith to me.

Rex. And Longaville was for my service born.

Mar. Domine is mine, as sure as bark on tree.

Boyet. Madam, and pretty mistress, give ear:

Immediately they will again be here

In their own shapes; for it can never be

They will digest this harsh indignity.

Boyet. They will, they will, God knows,

And leap for joy, though they are lame with blows:

Therefore change favors, and when they repair,

Blow like sweet roses in this summer air.

Prin. How blow? how blow? speak to be under-
stood.

Boyet. Fair ladies mask'd are roses in their bud,

Damask'd, their damask sweet commixture shown,

Are angels [vailing] clouds, or roses blown.

Prin. Avant, perplexity! What shall we do,

If they return in their own shapes to woo?

Rex. Good madam, if by me you'll be advis'd,

Let's mock them still, as well known as disguis'd.

Let us complain to them what fools were here,

Disguis'd like Muscovites, in shapeless gear,

And wonder what they were, and to what end

Their shallow shows and prologue witty pend'd,

And their rough carriage so ridiculous,

Should be presented at our tent to us.

Boyet. Ladies, withdraw; the gallants are at hand.

Prin. Whip to our tents, as roses [run] o'er land.

Enter [Princess and Ladies]

Enter the King and the rest [of the Lords in their

proper habits].

King. Fair air, God save you! Where's the

Princesse?

Boyet. Gone to her tent. Please it your Majesty

Command me any service to her thither?

King. That she vouchsafe me audience for one

word.

Boyet. I will, and so will she, I know, my lord.

Ber. This fellow pecks up wit as pigeons pease,

And utter it again when God doth please.

He is wit's pedlar, and retalts his wares.

At weeks and wasstalls, meagres, markars, makers:

And we that sell by gross, the Lord doth know,

Have not the grace to grace it with such show.

This gallant pins the wenchets on his sleeve;

He that been Adam, he had tempeart Eve,

A can carve too, and hisp; why, this is he

That kiss'd his hand away in courtesy;

This is the ape of form, monscieur the nice,

That when he plays at tables slides the dice

In honorable terms; nay, he can sing

A mean most meeall, and in hushing

Mend him who can. The ladies call him sweet;

The stairs as he treads on them kiss his feet.

This is the low'r that smiles on every one,

To show his teeth as white as whalke's bone;

And consciences that will not die in debt

Pay him the due of honey-tongued Boyet.

King. A blister on his sweet tongue, with my

heart,

That put Armado's page out of his part!

Enter the [PRINCESS, ushered by BOYET, and her]

Ladies.

Ber. See where it comes! Behavior, what wert thou

Till this madam show'd thee? And what art thou

now?

King. All hail, sweet madam, and fair time of day!

Prin. "Fair" in "all hail" is foul, as I conceive.

King. Confer my speeches better, if you may.

Prin. Then wish me better, I will give you leave.

King. We came to visit you, and purpose now

To load you to our court; vouchsafe us then.

Prin. This field shall hold me, and so hold your

vow:

Nor God, nor I, delights in perjur'd men.

King. Rebuff me not for that which you provoke:

The virtue of your eye must break my oath.

Prin. You nickname virtue; vice you should have

spoke,

For virtue's office never breaks men's truth.

Now by my maiden honor, yet as pure

As the unsullied lily, I protest,

A world of torment though I should endure,

I would not yield to be your house's guest:

So much I hate a breaking cause to be.

King. O, you have liv'd in desolation here,

Unseen, unvisited, much to our shame.

Prin. Not so, my lord, it is not so, I swear;

We have had pastimes here and pleasant game,

Lovers' Last

V. iii

and 330. Lovers' Last

281. plaid statute-caps: perhaps the wooden caps required by law to

be worn by the London apprentices.

282. visor: (1) forms; (2) clothes (cf. line 305).

283. digest: put up with, stomach. 292. repair return.

293. Beet: bloom.

294. damask: red and white, commixture: complexion.

297. vailing: lacing fall, shedding: blown; fully opened (cf. full

sail).

298. Avant, perplexity: away, riddler.

301. disguised: as much as in their real persons as when they were

enamored. 303. shapeless gown; ill-cut clothes.

307. Whip: dart, fly; lands: open space in a wooded area,

seam; pass.

316. utter: runs forth, tells. When... phrase; i.e., when the mo-

ment is propitious.

318. waskets: festivals. wasstalls: revells.

322.=lascivious or licentious.

323. waskets: festivals. wasstalls: revells.

349. nicknames: monscieur, madame.

Three-pil’d hyperboles, spousce affection,
Figures pedantical—all these summer flies
Have blown me full of maggot ostentation.
I do forewarn them, and I here protest,
By this white glove (how white the hand, God knows!),
Henceforth my wooing mind shall be express’d
In russet yess and honest kersey noes.
And to begin, wench, so God help me law!
My love to thee is sound, sans crack or flaw.
Ros. Sans “sans,” I pray you.
Ber. Yet I have a trick
Of the old rage. Bear with me, I am sick;
I’ll leave it by degrees. Soft, let us see—
Write “Lord have mercy on us” on those three:
They are infected, in their hearts it lies;
They have the plague, and caught it of your eyes.
These lords are visited; you are not free,
For the Lord’s tokens on you do I see.
Prin. No, they are free that gave these tokens to us.
Ber. Our states are forfeit, seek not to undo us.
Ros. It is not so, for how can this be true
That you stand forfeit, being those that sue?
Ber. Peace, for I will not have to do with you.
Ros. Nor shall not, if I do as I intend.
Ber. Speak for yourselves, my wit is at an end.
King. ’Tis true; we speak, sweet madam, for our rule transgression.
Some fair excuse.
Prin. The fairest is confession.
Were not you here but even now, disguis’d?
King. Madam, I was.
Prin. And were you well advis’d?
King. I was, fair madam.
Prin. When you were there, what did you whisper in your lady’s ear?
King. That more than all the world I did respect her.
Prin. When she shall challenge this, you will reject her.
King. Upon mine honor, no.
Prin. Peace, peace, forbear:
Your oath once broke, you force not to forswear.
King. Despise me when I break this oath of mine.
Prin. I will, and therefore keep it. Rosaline,
What did the Russian whisper in your ear?

361. mean: group of four. 365. to... days: in the current fashion.
370. happy: fanciful.
373. dry: dull, stupid (with pun on “thirsty”).
374. greet: I.e., look at. 386. demand: question.
392. sound: swoon.
397. confound: destroy. 400. wish: invite.
401. visit... upon: 404. friend: sweetheart.
405. like... song: Harping was proverbially the resource of the blind.
Ros. Madam, he swore that he did hold me dear
As precious eyght and did value me.
Above this world; adding thereto, moreover,
That he would wed me, or else die my lover.

Prin. God give thee joy of him! The noble lord
Most honorably doth uphold his word.

King. What mean you, madam? By my life, my

truth,
I never swore this lady such an oath.

Ros. By heaven, you did; and to confirm it plain,
You gave me this; but take it, sir, again.

King. My faith and this the Princess I did give;
I knew her by this jewel on her sleeve.

Prin. Pardon me, sir, this jewel did she wear,
And Lord Berowne (I thank him) is my dear.

What? will you have me, or your pearl again?

Ber. Neither of either; I remit both twain.

I see the trick an’s; here was a consent,
Knowing beforehand of your merit,
To dash it like a Christmas comedy.

Some carry-tale, some please-man, some slight zany,
Some mumble-new, some trencher-knight, some
Dick,
That smiles his check in years and knows the

trick
To make my lady laugh when she’s dispos’d,
Told our intents before; which once disclos’d,
The ladies did change favors; and then we,
Following the signs, wo’d but the sign of she.

Now, to our perjury to add more terror,
We are again forsworn, in will and error.

Much upon this ‘tis; [to Boyet] and might not you
Forewarn our sport, to make us thus untrue?

Do not you know my lady’s foot by th’ squint,
And laugh upon the apple of her eye?

And stand between her back, sir, and the fire,
Holding a trencher, jesting merrily?

You put our page out. Go, you are allowed;
Die when you will, a smack shall be your shroud.

You leer upon me, do you? There’s an eye

Wounds like a leaderboard.

Boyet. Full merrily
Hath this brave [manage], this career, been run.

Ber. Lo, he is tilting straight! Peace, I have done.

Enter Clown [Costard].

Welcome, pure wine, thou part at a fair fray.

Cost. O Lord, sir, they would know
Whether the three Worshippes shall come in or no.
Ber. What, are there but three?

Cost. No, sir, but it is very fine,
For every one parents three.

Ber. And three times thrice is nine.

Cost. Not so, sir, under correction, sir; I hope it
is not so.

You cannot beg us, sir, I can assure you, sir, we know
what we know.

I hope, sir, three times thrice, sir—

Ber. Is not nine.

Cost. Under correction, sir, we know whereunto it
doeth amount.

Ber. By love, I always took three threes for nine.

Cost. O Lord, sir, it were pity you should get
your living by reck’nig, sir.

Ber. How much is it?

Cost. O Lord, sir, the parties themselves, the
seers, sir, will show whereunto it doeth amount.

For mine own part, I am, as they say, but to per-
fect one man in one poor man, Pompeyon the Great,
sir.

Ber. Art thou one of the Worshippes?

Cost. It pleads them to think me worthy of
Pompeyon the Great; for mine own part, I know
not the degree of the Worthy, but I am to stand for
him.

Ber. Go bid them prepare.

Cost. We will turn it finely off, sir; we will take
some care.

Exit. 410

King. Berowne, they will shame us; let them not
approach.

Ber. We are shame-proof, my lord; and ‘tis some
policy
To have one show worse than the King’s and his
company.

King. I say they shall not come.

Prin. Nay, my good lord, let me o’errule you now.

That sport best pleases that doth [least] know how:

Where zeal strives to content, and the contents
Dies in the zeal of that which it presents.

Their form confounded makes most form in mirth,
When great things laboring perish in their birth.

Ber. A right description of our sport, my lord.

Enter Braggart [Armado].

Arm. Anointed, I implore so much expense of thy
royal sweet breath as will utter a brace of words.

[Converses apart with the King, and delivers
him a paper.]

Prin. Dost this man serve God?

[487. very.

488. represents; i.e. represents. 489. subject to.

490. beg us; prove us fools. 491. whereunto, i.e. to
how much.

496. it— got it would be too bad if you had to earn.

501-2. perfections, i.e. perform or present.

502. Pompeyon; pumpkin; error for Pompeyon.

512. policy: who strategy.

517-18. the contents . . . presents; i.e. the substance of the play is
murdered by the actors in their excessive eagerness to please (which
makes them undertake too ambitious a project for their talents).

531. sight: exact. — our sport; i.e. the Muscovite masque.
Love's Labor's Lost
V. ii

Ber. Why ask you? 531

Prin. 'A speaks not like a man of God his making.

Arm. That is all one, my fair, sweet, honey
monarch; for I protest, the schoolmaster is ex-
ceeding fantastical, too vain, too vain: but we
will put it (as they say) to fortuna de la van
[guerra]. I wish you the peace of mind, most royal
compelment.

Exit.

King. Here is like to be a good presence of
Worthies: he presents Hector of Troy; the swain,
Pompey the Great; the parish curate, Alexander;
Armado's page, Hercules; the pedlar, Judas Macha-
beus; And if these four Worthies in their first show thrive,
These four will change habits, and present the other
five.

Ber. There is five in the first show. 540

King. You are deceived, 'tis not so.

Ber. The pedlar, the briggart, the hedge-priest,
the fool, and the boy:
Abate throw at novum, and the whole world again
Cannot pick out five such, take each one in his vein.

King. The ship is under sail, and here she comes
again.

Enter [COSTARD for] Pompey.

Cott. "I Pompey am"—

Ber. "You lie, you are not he.

Cott. "Pompey am"—

Boyet. "With libbard's head on knee.

Ber. Well said, old mocks. I must needs be
friends with thee.

Cott. "I Pompey am, Pompey surnam'd the
Big"—


Cott. It is "Great," sir.

"Pompey surnam'd the Great,
That oft in field with targe and shield did make
my fee to sweat,
And travelling along this coast, I here am come by
chance,
And lay my arms before the legs of this sweet lass
of France."

If your ladyship would say, "Thanks, Pompey;"
I had done.

[Prin.] "Great thanks, great Pompey.

Cott. "Tis not so much worth, but I hope I was
perfect. I made a little fault in "Great."

Ber. My hat to a halfpenny, Pompey proves the
best Worthy.

Enter Carate [Sir Nathaniel] for Alexander.

Nath. "When in the world I liv'd, I was the
world's commander;
By cast, west, north, and south, I spread my conquer-
ing might.
My scutcheon plain declares that I am Alixander"—

Boyet. Your nose says, no, you are not; for it
stands too right.

Ber. Your nose smells "no" in [this], most tender-
smelling knight.

Prin. The conqueror is dismay'd. Proceed, good
Alexander.

Nath. "When in the world I liv'd, I was the
world's commander"—

Boyet. Most true, 'tis right; you were so, Alixan-
der.

Ber. Pompey the Great—

Cott. Your servaunt, and Costard.

Boyet. Take away the conqueror, take away Ali-
xander.

Cott. [To Nathaniel.] O sir, you have overthrown
Alixander the conqueror! You will be scrap'd 578
out of the painted cloth for this. Your lion, that
holds his poll-axe sitting on a close-stool, will be given
to Ajax; he will be the ninth Worthy. A conqueror,
and afraid to speak! Run away for shame, Alixander.
[Nathaniel retires.] There shall not please you, 580
a foolish mild man, an honest man, look you, and
soon dash'd. He is a marvellous good neighbor, faith,
and a very good boweler; but for Alixander—alas,
you see how 'tis—a little o'repar'd. But there are
Worthies a-coming will speak their mind in some
other sort.

Prin. Stand aside, good Pompey.

Enter Pedant [HOLOFERNES] for Judas, and the Boy
[Motio] for Hercules.

Hal. "Great Hercules is presented by this imp,
Whose club kill'd Cerberus, that three-headed comit;
And when he was a babe, a child, a shrimp, 600
Thus did he strangle serpents in his manus.
Quantam he semeth in minority,
Ergo I come with this apology."

[Aside.] Keep some state in thy exit, and vanish.

"Judas I am"—

Dumm. A Judas!

Hal. Not Iscariot, sir.

"Judas I am, yelped Machabeus."

556. right: straight. (an allusion to a reputed physical characteristic
of Alexander, a wiry neck.)
555. Year...this. Alexander was reputed to possess skin and breath
of a "marvellous good savour" (Worth's Phræct). tender-amiss. exalted
with a sensitive sense of smell.
575-76. You...this. An allusion to the frequent representation of
the Nine Worthies on canvass or tapestries.
580-81. (=.) deck; close-stool. Alexander's arms showed a lion seated in
a chair and holding a battle-axe. close-stool; privy.
583. On a pun on a loan; i.e. a privy. Ajax, a Greek warrior,
covered the armor of the slain Achilles.
584. o'repar'd: given too difficult a part.
585. =: child (as at L.35).
589. Cerberus: the three-headed dog at the entrance to Hades, whose
capture was one of Achilles' tasks. cannis: dog (properly canis).
591. manor hands. 592. Quantam: since.
593. Ergo therefore. 594. stater dignity.
598. yelped: called (as at L.240).
LOVE SHEDDEN

particularly itself. Queer theory promises to break my heart, and yet I continue
to pursue it. Friends have counseled that I will get hurt, that the object of my
affections will love me and leave me, that I would be better off settling down
with a theory more reliable, less wayward. My response? "O appetite, from
judgment stand aloof!" I cannot help myself. An enormous chocolate cake
might as well sit before me, and I can do nothing but eat the whole thing.
Queer theory may not be "good," but it is delicious.

And as I have taken the primrose path to the everlasting bonfire of queer
theory, I invite you to do the same. Shakespeare, no doubt, would extend the
invitation, as well. It is not going to be easy or simple or comforting, but it
will be fun. So just try it; let yourself go. One might rather say, by way of
persuasion: When thou impressest, what are precepts worth of stale example?
When thou wilt inflame how coldly those impediments stand forth of wealth,
of filial fear, law, kindred, fame. I am sure you will quickly find that queer
theory reconfigures the texture of reality, ignites passion, makes the world
more vibrant, inspires devotion, and breaks your heart. But on breaking your
heart, if it gives you cause to complain, queer theory also fundamentally
redefines the word "complaint." "A Lover's Complaint" turns out to be no
complaint at all. It is, rather, an ecstatic encomium to desire, its necessary
failures, and the erotic surcharge of failure itself. To complain, queer theory
suggests, is to enjoy—to enjoy, that is, the fall.

Notes

   Citations in parentheses are to this edition.
2. "Sonnet 20," ibid., 2. 7. 3.
5. Dollimore, Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault, 172.

Love's Labour's Lost

The L Words

MADHAVI MENON

It is because we already have experience of that which makes
the present noncontemporaneous with itself that we can
actually historicise.
—Dipesh Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe, 112.

Although it poses as a comedy, Love's Labour's Lost does not end happily. It
closets itself generically by appearing to be something—a comedy about love
—that it cannot actually bring itself to be. "Our wooing doth not end like an
old play. / Jack hath not Jill," laments Biron at the end when, instead of four
weddings, there is a funeral, and the men and women go their separate ways.
The play thus turns out to be a comedy in drag—its appearance lives up to all
the generic requirements of the comic form: four highborn men to match
four highborn women, low-brow humor, sexual innuendo, and a play that
moves toward heterosexual marriage. But this apparent compliance with
genre belies a resistance to its own form. The play looks like a comedy but it
does not act like one—or, rather, its desires appear to exceed, or fall short of,
its comic appearance. Instead of sexual gratification, the play only serves
sexual mystification. And instead of straight women—"the Jills for whom the
Jacks pine—"the play abounds with lipstick lesbians.²

Not that there are any lesbians in this play, with or without lipstick—at
least, none that we would recognize as lesbians. But recognition is precisely
one of those fraught issues that trips us up in relation to this text, starting with
our recognition of the play as a comedy and extending to the fact that almost
everyone in it is continually in disguise.³ The non-contemporaneity that Di-
pesh Chakrabarty sees as the hallmark of history is at work also in a Shake-
spearean play where nothing is but what is not. "The gallants shall be tested,"
the Princess announces before one of the many scenes of disguise in which
the men encounter the women, "For, ladies, we will every one be masked, /

And not a man of them shall have the grace, / Despite of suit, to see a lady’s face” (5.2.127–30).

This specter of the masked lady, of the woman who cannot be identified at first glance, is also the specter of the lipstick lesbian who embodies the schism between an outside that “appears to be an integrated, stable subject according to the rules of normative heterosexuality,” and an inside that gives the lie to such an appearance. Rather than being suggestive of her sexual identity, the lipstick lesbian’s desire is understood to be the opposite of the straight femininity she performs. This understanding is based on two assumptions: one, that identity should be transparent—you need to look like what you are; and two, that femininity in and of itself is putatively hetero—femme women are straight until proved otherwise. The lipstick lesbian does not coincide with herself, and the fear is that her appearance does not line up with her “reality.” But what if the lipstick lesbian is all surface? What if the deceitful exterior is all we have by way of identity, with no internal “truth” to offset it? What if, rather than showing up the distinction between surface and depth, the lipstick lesbian insists on the depth of surfaces—she both is and is not a straight femme? Refusing to dive “beneath” her exterior, the lipstick lesbian presents herself as a problem of legibility on the surface. She is superficially difficult and provides no key with which to unlock her secrets. Instead of providing answers, she only poses troubling questions: Are our decisions about desire based on an exterior that is always deceitful? If so, then how do we ascertain the truth of desire? Would our regimes of fixing identity fail if there were no recognizable truth to desire?

These questions all hinge on the relation between exterior and interior, desire and truth. They also hinge on the lipstick lesbian, who seems to defy the stricture that desire be legible. Indeed, “lipstick” becomes a dangerous supplement to the “lesbian” whose internal identity is seen to be at odds with the femme style of her surface. By using the lipstick lesbian to bear the burden of a disjunction between the so-called outside and in, normative sexuality protects itself from having to face up to the uncertainty of its own appearance. But this uncertainty inheres in the very formulation of the relation between exterior and interior. On the one hand, identitarian sexuality suggests there is a difference between outside and inside, and on the other hand, it insists that the one should be indicative of the other. The outside is held to be both unreliable and a stable indicator of real identity; appearances both deceive and lead to truth. No matter what its superficial relation to the untruth, the inside is always understood to be the realm of truth. In a similarly phobic vein, the characters in Love’s Labour’s Lost continually stage the movement away from an unreliable outside to an internal truth. Starting with the men’s search for knowledge at the expense of carnal pleasure, and ending with the women’s dictate that the men need to learn true love, all the characters are in thrall to maintaining the distinction between outside and inside, which gets mapped onto appearance and truth, inferior and superior.

But the crime of the lipstick lesbian is that she deceives and she deceives—her surface is allegedly a lie in relation to her inside, and her inside is allegedly a lie in relation to her outside. She provides no safe space in which to articulate identity, no whorl within which fixity can emerge in full bloom. She embodies the very thing from which normativity recoils: the lack of truth in desire. And the play plays along with this lack, staying with the surface and probing its depths without succumbing to them. Indeed, Love’s Labour’s Lost has often been accused of being all surface, all rhetorical flourish and no substance, all lust and no love, “promoting verbal matter at the expense of signified matter,” as James Calderwood puts it. Unlike other Shakespearean comedies that focus on the epistemological conundrum posed by the cross-dressed body—the inside at odds with an outside—Love’s Labour’s Lost stays with the female body as the one that on the surface itself defines our regimes of knowing desire and identity. If femininity, like comedy, is meant to ensure internal compliance with an external norm, if it is meant to be what it looks like, then both Love’s Labour’s Lost and lipstick lesbians resist that compliance from within the form of compliance: their surface is both suggestive and destructive of themselves.

Such an assertion might suggest the universal falsity of femininity: all women believe the truth. This misogynistic conviction that women are not to be trusted, however, is far from the situation that lipstick lesbians allow us to theorize. For Lisa Walker, the femme “both constructs the illusion of an interior gendered self (she looks like a straight woman) and parodies it (what you see is not what you get). Bringing the femme to the foreground elucidates the limitations of the expressive model of gender/sexual identity.” What Love’s Labour’s Lost does, however, is not only focus on the limits of representation for sexual identity but also highlights the schism within the surface of representation where identity is both produced and parodied. The play cannot end according to generic plan, because it cannot generate an identity where appearance will be coincident with essence. The problematic of the lipstick lesbian—that her appearance fails to signify in a stable manner—is also the problematic of Love’s Labour’s Lost. Both fail the first rule of
identities are continually shifting, then how does one assign stability to difference? If straight women differ from lesbians because of X, then what happens if, far from marking the spot, X keeps shifting? What if the fond desire expressed in the play—"Immediately they will again be here / In their own shapes" (5.2.287–8)—can never be fulfilled as a demand for authenticity of appearance? Are lipstick lesbians the mirror into which we must all, as subjects of desire and regardless of sexual orientation, look? And if so, then does such a template serve to universalize lipstick lesbians while canceling their specificity as femme women desiring other women? For Alain Badiou, this alleged "universalism," far from flattening out difference, merely "presents itself as an indifference that tolerates differences." Which is to say, the theorization of desire enabled by the lipstick lesbian does not universalize lipstick lesbians as the representative of all humanity and does not cancel the specific configuration of their desire. Rather, it allows us to be indifferent to the truth claim of different desires as being different from one another. This indifference allows us to isolate the lipstick lesbian as the figure most fully engaged with our collective fears about the untrustworthiness of desire and our collective fantasies about making desire meaningful. The "universalism" of the lipstick lesbian, therefore, does not banish difference as much as it lives in difference.

As Biron knows, this means one cannot always tell straight femme from queer, comedy from tragedy, and apparent from real. If, according to Cyrus Hoy, "the basic pattern of Shakespearian comedy . . . consists in a movement from the artificial to the natural, always with the objective of finding oneself," then Love's Labour's Lost doubly defies its comic status by moving from artifice to artifice and never allowing either its characters or its readers to "find" themselves. Instead, it problematizes the nature of the self by suggesting repeatedly that a face is meant to be out-faced—or, rather, that the face to which we have access both provides and thwarts our desire for a stable identity. It is in this sense that Biron banters with a dejected Holofernes who has been scorned for his role in the presentation of "The Nine Worthies":

Biron: And now forward, for we have put thee in countenance.
Holofernes: You have put me out of countenance.
Biron: False, we have given thee faces.
Holofernes: But you have out-faced them all. (5.2.607–11)

In Love's Labour's Lost, a face can exist only in multiple forms, and those forms can exist only in a state of perpetual unwriting. This resistance to deep legi-
bility condemns a text about desire to play out without resolution. There is no relief in the play—even the dance with which most comedies vent their joy at having escaped nearly sodomitical experiences (Twelfth Night, for instance) is denied us. Instead, all we get is the announcement of a death and the postponement of desire's fulfillment. As far as the play is concerned, desire names the very thing that cannot be fulfilled even as it continually asks to be satisfied.

Lipstick lesbians thus name a problematic in our current day that resonates with the one explored in Love's Labour's Lost more than four hundred years ago. The non-coincidence of appearance and desire calls into question the status of identity formulated on the basis of desire; Shakespeare's play is filled with the hollowness of identifiable identity, and offers us instead a superficial depth that can never fully be plumbed. But we, writing about Shakespeare several centuries after the play, in a moment that we celebrate as being theoretically queer, remain attached to having identity positions legitimate our thoughts. One sees this repeatedly in essays and books in which critics provide their sexual credentials as a way to justify their critical concerns. But lipstick lesbians work precisely to undermine that justification. They do not provide us with a sexual identity so much as challenge the notion of an identity in which desires match and support acts that, in turn, match and support one's being in the world. Like Love's Labour's Lost, lipstick lesbians "offer a series of false bottoms" where the "truth" is indistinguishable from the surface and the surface is too stylish to match the truth.11 The irony of "saying one thing and meaning another" marks both sets of "I," words, characterizing everyone and everything in a play where disguise is the norm and heterosexuality does not emerge triumphant at the end. The lesson of the lipstick lesbian, then, of women who "long, love, lust," to quote words from the title song of the hit television series The L Word, is to consider what it means to look the part and then to part that look from anything we might be tempted to call identity.

Notes

1. Love's Labour's Lost, in Greenblatt et al., The Norton Shakespeare, 5.2.851–53. Citations in parentheses are to this edition.

2. The term "lipstick lesbians" had its American heyday in the 1990s. Although it is not currently in vogue, the linguistic resonance of the term continues to reveal much about our desire to embody sexuality.