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- 1 I begin with an entry from the diary of the German novelist Thomas Mann, writing in Pacific Palisades, California on 18 May 1943. Mann is reflecting on the latest news and relating his own activities on that day: "All Europe in invasion fever. Preparations of the French underground organization. Announcement of general strike. The garrison in Norway is instructed to fight 'to the last man' [...]. In Africa 200,000 prisoners were taken. [...] Expectation of the invasion of Italy. Undertakings against Sardinia and Sicily are in the offing. [...] In the evening read *Love's Labour's Lost*."¹ The apparent discrepancy between the chaos of the European war – prisoners taken, invasion fever, underground resistance – and *this* Shakespeare play is at first glance stunning. If it had been *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, or *Coriolanus*, then the associations with apocalypse, madness and tyranny, and totalitarian rule would have been clear, yet these plays are never mentioned in this period of his diary. But *Love's Labour's Lost* of course is central to Thomas Mann's novel *Dr. Faustus*, as the central character in the novel composes an opera based on *Love's Labour's Lost* early in his career. Mann's novel was begun, and it begins, five days after the diary entry I read, on 23 May 1943.²

- 2 I invoke Thomas Mann here because the conjunction in his thinking of desperate world events on the one hand, and on the other the play that George Bernard Shaw called "a sunny, joyous, and delightful play" seems contradictory, even perverse.³ Yet the modern critical and production histories of *Love's Labour's Lost* do in fact reflect an increasingly dark interpretation of the play and a belief that its aesthetic can, at least in part, be understood as associated with death and violence, even explicitly with war. The current production by the Royal Shakespeare Company, directed by Christopher Luscombe, includes a pairing with a play they are dubiously calling "*Love's Labour's Won* [also known as *Much Ado About Nothing*]").

Figure 1. Royal Shakespeare Company, 2014; Christopher Luscombe, director. Screen Grab.

URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17JLGj_pBQ8

- 3 The advance publicity on the RSC website describes the setting of the two plays as “either side of the First World War [... *Love's Labour's Lost*] conjuring up the carefree elegance of a pre-war Edwardian summer; the other [*Much Ado*], in a post-war England when the world has changed forever.”⁴ “Edwardian” refers to the period c. 1900-1914 in England, roughly coinciding with the reign of King Edward VII, 1901-1910. Going even further, the designer of a 1988 American production, set in the 1930s, noted that “the audience knows that everyone is on the brink of World War II. Berowne is undoubtedly killed in the war before the year is up.”⁵ Berowne’s imminent death is certainly news to most of us: who knew that “a year and a day” really means “forever”?
- 4 What accounts for this way of setting the play in wartime? The play text, to be sure, repeatedly invokes tropes of warfare. The “civil war of wits” (2.1.222)⁶ has long been recognized as central to the play’s linguistic texture.⁷ The play’s rhetorical structure often follows the paradigm of a *débat* – literalized at the end of the play in the songs of spring and winter – and the “war” of wit is played out repeatedly in the encounters of the four lords and ladies as well as in the conversations of Armado, Holofernes, and Moth. “The tongues of mocking wenches,” Boyet marvels, “are as keen / As is the razor’s edge invisible [...] Their conceits have wings / Fleeter than arrows, bullets, wind, thought, swifter things” (5.2.256-61). These razors, arrows, and bullets are only figurative of course, as is the internalized, psychological “war against your own affections” (1.1.9) that Navarre urges on his fellow academics. In his great speech in 4.3, Berowne brings the four lords together in the language of chivalry and war as – each man now revealed as having lost the war against his own affections – they prepare to woo the ladies: “Have at you, then, affection’s men-at-arms!” Navarre answers him, “Saint Cupid, then! And, soldiers, to the field!” and Berowne returns with the martial-sexual cry, “Advance your standards, and upon them, lords! / Pell-mell, down with

them!" (4.3.281, 335-7). The Pageant of the Nine Worthies, too, represents figures of war, with Alexander the Great, "the world's commander" with his "conquering might" (5.2.552-3), as well as Hector, trying to invoke "The armipotent Mars" (5.2.634), the god of war; Hector "far surmounted Hannibal" (5.2.652), but further claims of the deeds of war are interrupted by Costard's news about Jaquenetta's pregnancy, and the mock-chivalric "challenge" of Costard by Armado follows, stopped short by Armado's sartorial short-comings: "I will not combat in my shirt" (5.2.681-2). Armado's very name, finally, also serves as a reminder of the not-quite war with the Spanish fleet in 1588.

- 5 In addition to these linguistic and psychological threads, the play's disputed debt between the King of France and Navarre concerns the "hundred thousand crowns, / Being but the one half of an entire sum," supposedly "Disbursed by [Navarre's] father in his wars" (2.1.126-9), while the four lords' names point toward historical actors in the French wars of religion from the 1570s into the 1590s. The historical king from Navarre was Henri, not Shakespeare's Ferdinand, but among the prominent figures around Henri of Navarre were the duc d'Alençon, Henri's powerful enemy the duc de Mayenne, and Henri's followers, the duc de Longueville and the duc de Biron.⁸ The currency and topicality of these names in the early to mid-1590s seems significant, especially given Henri of Navarre's famous conversion to Catholicism in 1593. "So outrageous was Henri's abjuration to English Protestants [...] that *Love's Labour's Lost* may be the only Elizabethan literary text," Richard Wilson has argued, "that dares, even elliptically, refer to it."⁹ But what exactly is the significance of these echoes, even if we accept Wilson's claim? Answering that question is difficult, and I cannot see the play as the topical allegory that some have argued it is. It is certainly true that many Elizabethans had first-hand knowledge of the events of St. Bartholomew's Day 1572. Sir Walter Raleigh fought for the Protestant cause in France as a teenager from 1568-1572, and was still writing about his experiences from his cell in the Tower of London in 1614.¹⁰ If not first-hand, then Elizabethans had elaborate second-hand knowledge through the flood of pamphlets and polemical texts that reached England in the aftermath of the events of St. Bartholomew's Day, or through such sensationalistic plays as Christopher Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*.
- 6 Some scholars have argued that *Love's Labour's Lost* alludes to even earlier events in French politics – either a meeting between Navarre and Catherine de Medici in 1586, or much earlier, the meeting between Navarre and Marguerite de Valois in 1578.¹¹ The idea that these decades-earlier events in the French court materialize in Shakespeare's play seems to me highly unlikely, for too many reasons to investigate here. The most I can conclude is that Shakespeare seems to have employed these contemporary names from recent and current French history to encode "the French court" and "oath-breaking" in an extremely general way.
- 7 These and many other of the play's allusions to war, combat, or assault do not lead to actual violence on the stage, and the "wars" of Navarre's father seem to be over. Nevertheless, there has been a trend in Great Britain and the U.S since the 1970s to stage the play during or just before or after an actual war. This trend may have been inspired by the shock of the play's ending, in its announcement of the death of the Princess's off-stage father, the King of France. Shakespeare may have found the hint for this stunning reversal in one of the books he read, Pierre de la Primaudaye's *L'Académie Française*, published in France in 1577 and translated into English in 1586, with further

editions in 1589 and 1594, close to *Love's Labour's Lost's* period of composition. Like Berowne and his fellow academics in the play, the young scholars in *L'Académie Française* suffered shocking news from the outside world: "the sudden and sorrowfull newes of the last frantike returne of France into civill war brake up their happie assemblée."¹² Of course, NO British or American director or producer has ever invoked *L'Académie Française* as an inspiration for their production.

- 8 I believe that we can trace the turn to war in *Love's Labour's Lost's* production history to several events in the play's post-1945 critical and performance history, as well as to some larger cultural shifts. The first event is Peter Brook's 1946 RSC production. Although his design was inspired by Watteau and the production as a whole made no reference to war, Brook saw that Marcadé's shocking entrance totally changed the play: "I was struck," he said, by the fact that when

a new, unexpected character called Mercade came on, the whole play changed its tone entirely. He came into an artificial world to announce a piece of news that was real. He came on bringing death [...] there's no doubt that the dark touch gives the dimension to the whole piece. And it was through this that I brought Mercade over a rise at the back of the stage – it was evening, the lights were going down, and suddenly there appeared a man in black. The man in black came onto a very pretty summery stage, with everybody in pale pastel [...] costumes, and golden lights dying. It was very disturbing, and at once the whole audience felt that the world had been transformed.¹³

- 9 Director after director has followed Brook's lead, and his insights were put into academic form by the influential 1953 essay by Bobbyanne Rosen [later known as Anne Barton], who described Marcadé's entering the scene

silently from those shadows which now lie deep along the landscape of the royal park There is perhaps nothing like this moment in the whole range of Elizabethan drama. In the space of four lines the entire world of the play, its delicate balance of reality and illusion, all the hilarity and overwhelming life of its last scene has been swept away and destroyed, as Death itself actually enters the park, for the first time, in the person of Marcade.¹⁴

- 10 Subsequent critics would demonstrate that death enters the play, not for the "first time" in this final moment, but much earlier, through a string of references, including the "disgrace of death" (1.1.3) in the opening speech, the "epitaph on the death of the deer" (4.2.45-6), the "death's face in a ring" (5.2.598), and the "plague...tokens" (5.2.421-3) inscribed on the lovers' faces. "Cormorant devouring time" (1.1.4) haunts the play. Still, Brook and Rosen established a paradigm of staging and interpretation, in which "the entire world of the play" (Rosen) as a whole is now seen as "an artificial world" (Brook) which is "swept away and destroyed" (Rosen) by the "real" (Brook), by "Death [...] in the person of Marcade" (Rosen). This reading is powerful and plausible, and many of us have profited from it, but it is perhaps worth noting that it nonetheless devalues almost everything that is energetic, positive, and attractive in the play as "artificial" and unreal, and that price may not be worth paying.¹⁵ Moreover, six decades later Brook himself saw his production not as implicated in war, but influenced "by the post-war reaction against four years of drabness and austerity. We longed for elegance and charm," which he found not in traditional Elizabethan clothing but in the paintings of Watteau. Brook in fact now describes the play as "an extraordinary, amazing and

intoxicating experience,” which “suddenly introduced an enigmatic *coexistence* of light and dark.”¹⁶

- 11 Directors and critics usually justify the leap from the insights of Brook and Barton about the compelling entrance of Death into the play, to a production placing this play in a clearly defined war-time setting, by referring to the play as a whole as a “golden” or “unreal” world whose values cannot survive any encounter with the “real” – that is war; surveying a number of productions set in the pre-World War II 1930s, one critic has claimed, with the dubious authority of hindsight, that these productions were the result of “the gathering storm which foreboded the approach of disaster for the world, [in which] people became more susceptible to the fear of the ominous intruder who might at any moment come and snatch away their life and mirth.”¹⁷ This interpretive hind-sight comes too easily for me.
- 12 *Love's Labour's Lost* has been set in many different time periods, and surely most often in a non-specific vaguely “Renaissance” period, with doublets and hose and the usual signifiers of “Shakespeare” (fig. 2).¹⁸

Figure 2. Globe Theatre, 2009. Screen Grab of DVD.

“Rosaline,” “Princess of France,” “Boyet,” “Katherine,” “Maria.”

- 13 The play has also frequently been set, as we would expect, in the eighteenth century, as in one American production that used “images from the mid-1750s” in order to “point up the artificiality of the world of the self-indulgent and immature lords and ladies” (fig. 3).¹⁹

Figure 3. BBC TV, 1985, directed by Elijah Moshinsky. Screen Grab of DVD.

"Dumaine," "Ferdinand," "Longaville."

- 14 Virtually every time period from faux-"Renaissance" to the present has been deployed, and the transposition to later time periods is invariably justified as a way to make relevant, or to gloss over, for modern audiences what is also invariably called the play's "difficult," "obscure," or "archaic" language.

But I am interested here specifically in those productions that invoke war as the play's context. If the play must be set during, before, or between times of war, *which* wars, and *why*?²⁰ The threat of World War II, as I have already suggested, has frequently been used as a setting. Jerome Kilty, directing a 1985 production at the American Repertory Theatre (fig. 4), had "newly set" the play "in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of World War II, the last era when the world still seemed fresh and humankind felt relatively free of threatening external exigencies," according to the ART Artistic Director Robert Brustein. But the director Kilty asked, rather contradicting Brustein, for the period of the play, "why not the end of the Age of Anxiety, prelude to the Atomic Age?"²¹ Why not indeed, but were the 1930s to be thought of as a "fresh" period of history "relatively free of threatening external" forces, which seems historically naïve (to say the least), or as the Age of pre-Atomic Anxiety? Blurring its supposed historical period, this production offered the setting of an Edwardian soirée – seemingly at one of the colleges at Oxford.

Figure 4. American Repertory Theatre, Cambridge, MA, 1985.

Photo by Richard Feldman. © American Repertory Theatre, courtesy of Internet Shakespeare Editions, University of Victoria (B.C., Canada).

- 15 Perhaps the most famous, or infamous, such setting occurred in Kenneth Branagh's 2000 film of the play, which again placed the play in the period just before World War II, in fact beginning precisely in September 1939 as the voice-over narrator (Branagh himself) intones:

Ominous clouds of war may be hovering over Europe, but here in Navarre, the young King, seen here returning from military manoeuvres, has announced an audacious plan. [...] He and his companions are to cast off their military uniforms, while world events still allow, and devote themselves to a rigorous three years of study. That's right, three years.

- 16 Throughout the film, war looms in the European theater, ominous movie reel headlines keep updating us, even briefly showing the D-Day invasion (fig. 5), and the film ends, not "a year and a day" later, but six years later, on V.E. Day 1945, when the principal characters, amazingly none the worse for their imprisonment by Nazi guards, in fact with their same clothes and in good health, reunite, finally bursting back into color (fig. 6).

Figure 5. Kenneth Branagh, director, 2000. Screen Grab of DVD.

Figure 6. Kenneth Branagh, director, 2000. Screen Grab of DVD.

- 17 The happy ending, however, did not include Boyet, who had joined the Resistance and was shot and had to die in gloomy black and white. “The ‘war’ element of the film,” Russell Jackson discretely notes, “in itself was problematic.” He reports that the script “originally called for a shot where the men’s aircraft would be seen flying over the massed crosses of a First World War graveyard,” but while that scene, we can be grateful, didn’t make it into the film, the “underlying sense” of the film was always that “retreat to a ‘little academe’ was an escape from the realities of the late 1930s.”²² The

aesthetic and historiographical justifications for these choices, however, remain obscure. In an interview, Branagh said he saw the 1930s as a “last idyll in the twentieth century ... a stolen, magical, idyllic time which nevertheless had a clock ticking.”²³ Thus, as in Kilty's production, we have contradictory ideas about the 1930s period: can it be both “a stolen, magical, idyllic time” and the one of brutal “realities” from which the lords “retreat” and “escape”?

- 18 Branagh's attempt to fuse the 1930s musical genre, the Shakespearean text, and this ominous historical moment into an ultimately sunny and optimistic vision of plucky British endurance has been harshly critiqued in penetrating terms by Ramona Wray, Katherine Eggert, and others, as escapist nostalgia and “self-serving political myopia,” as Wray put it.²⁴ Leaving aside this analysis of Branagh's aesthetics in general, I return to the problem of the choice of war in itself. Other directors have also set the play in the 1930s: one American production, as I have already noted, takes place, according to its director, in “the early 1930s, before the clouds of World War II darkened the national spirit. It was suggestive of the wit and wisdom of *Brideshead Revisited*,” and as the set designer confidently predicted, “Berowne is undoubtedly killed in the war before the year is up.”²⁵
- 19 One final moment in the Branagh film leads us to another war: one of the “newsreel” shots Branagh deployed announces “Victory” in the bold headlines of the “Globe” newspaper (fig. 7), but a closer look at the masthead – notice the blue arrow pointing to the date – indicates VE day as November 11 (fig. 8).

Figure 7. Kenneth Branagh, director, 2000. Screen Grab of DVD.

Figure 8. Kenneth Branagh Film DVD Screen Grab Detail.

- 20 But November 11 was of course when World War I ended, not World War 2; VE Day in World War II was 8 May 1945, while the Pacific war ended in August 1945. Branagh's conflation of the two wars – surely not a simple historical mistake – not only introduces an historical indeterminacy, but suggests that the pre-World War I era is also part of his conception.²⁶ Like a magnet pulling one back, the Edwardian age (roughly from 1900 to the beginning of the Great War in 1914) has become the default period and style for staging many of Shakespeare's plays but especially *Love's Labour's Lost*.
- 21 The first major production to set the play in the pre-World War I setting – and, as far as I can tell, the first production to set the play in *any* framework of war – seems to have been Robin Phillips' 1978 Stratford, Ontario version in which, at the end of the play, as one reviewer described it:

A distant rumbling was heard, over the horizon. The principals paused, looking at each other, puzzled. Was it thunder? Or gunfire? The belle époque ended with the guns of the Marne on the horizon.²⁷

- 22 In 1993, Ian Judge directed the RSC production that is often "referred to as the 'Brideshead Revisited'²⁸ production," as Sylvia Norris has noted: "The programme cover of Judge's production showing the four young men lounging in a punt was shot on the Avon, but was intended to suggest Oxford," and, she observes, the imagery clearly alluded to the "Brideshead Revisited" television series (1981), which became extremely popular in the UK and the US, and then became a movie in 2008 (fig. 9 and 10).

Figure 9. Brideshead Revisited, 1981, directed by Charles Sturridge and Michael Lindsay-Hogg.

Anthony Andrews, Jeremy Irons. URL: http://g-ecx.images-amazon.com/images/G/01/dvd/acorn/Brideshead_tall_large5.jpg

Figure 10. Royal Shakespeare Company, 1993, Ian Judge, director. Program Cover.

"Ferdinand," "Berowne," "Longaville," "Dumaine." URL: <http://www.ianjudge.com/plays/loves-labours-lost-rsc>

- 23 The production evoked, through its costume and set designs, the now-past glories of the pre-war period. At the end of the production, as with Phillips', Norris reports, "the sky darkened and the sound of distant explosions was heard in the theatre, a premonition that the elegant, witty world of the play was about to come to an unbearably violent end."²⁹ As Peter Holland acerbically noted, "it was the long summer of 1914 and the young men would never live out their year and a day in the trenches, a more absolute solution than the text's open-endedness."³⁰

- 24 Few war-time period productions of the play, however, could match Trevor Nunn's 2003 production at the National Theatre in London. I quote from the *National Theatre's Education Workpack*:

The last sweltering summer of 1914 before World War I has become [sic] fixed in memory as one of innocence and care-freedom. [...] In such an environment, when promises were made whose futures were uncertain and love pacts were torn asunder by the deafening clamour of bombs and massacre, we find direct correlation to our world of the play and the ambiguous ending that Shakespeare signals.³¹

- 25 The reviewer John Peter vividly described how Nunn's production altered the whole tone of the play at the very beginning:

We are in a forest clearing. The darkened Olivier stage is dominated by a bare beech, huge and ancient. Soldiers rush on. Explosions, gunfire. This is the first world war. An officer, whose resemblance to Wilfred Owen cannot be accidental, gets badly wounded. But this is *Love's Labour's Lost*, is it not? A comedy, surely?³²

- 26 Marcadé entered, and spoke his line, "The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo," and we discover that "one of the soldiers is Berowne. He attempts to console a wounded companion and in this moment recalls the previous summer which started with a vow."³³ According to one reviewer, though it is not so specified in the National Theatre's program synopsis, Berowne himself is "mortally wounded."³⁴ After this opening frame, the battlefield then disappeared, the smoke clears, the lights come up, the soldier Berowne rises and cautiously joins his friends, and the play itself begins. What followed was the now familiar procession of Edwardian costumes and iconic signifiers (see fig. 16 below). The final scene of the play found Marcadé entering again – the shock surprise he usually generates undermined – and repeating his line. The final action returned to the battlefield, where "Berowne turns around and amidst the horror of war sees a nurse. She turns to him. It is Rosaline."³⁵ "Did Berowne die in battle?" the reviewer Peter wondered: "It remains an open-ended question."³⁶ However Berowne's fate was read, Nunn's version framed the play strictly in the "horror of war," not just suggesting it with a rumble of guns, but showing it in some detail. Or, as the BBC reviewer said, noting that it was Nunn's last production as artistic director of the National Theatre, "If Nunn meant to go out with a bang, he need not have taken it quite so literally."³⁷

- 27 Nunn's and many, many other productions of *Love's Labour's Lost* now place the play in the Edwardian period, partly to take advantage of the impending Great War, partly to

indulge in costume orgies of English finery, but partly also to promulgate a particular reading of the play. One reviewer who approved of Nunn's version justified the setting thus: "The 1914-18 war is a great watershed dividing the antiquity of the nineteenth century from the modernity of the twentieth with all the technology. Trevor Nunn captures the nostalgia for this lost and elegant world where the women wear picture hats and long white lace dresses like the early film footage of the Tsarina Alexandra and her daughters, the Romanov grand duchesses."³⁸ Similar comments dominate the recent performance history of the play. For Nicholas Martin (in his 2006 Huntington Theatre production in Boston), the Edwardian period was "a time of insouciance and frivolity," and it "had a lightheartedness to it – there was a real rejection of Victorian era constraints [...]. The period from 1900-1912 seems to hold a sense of hope and innocence that resonates deeply with this play."³⁹ The play itself, another director asserted, "is *inherently* nostalgic."⁴⁰ The result of such assertions has been a sameness to many recent productions, as the following images suggest (fig. 11-19).⁴¹

Figure 11. Royal Shakespeare Company, April 1965, Barton/Jacobs.

Tom Holte: photographer. Rights: Thos. F. and Mig Holte Collection (Copyright Shakespeare Birthplace Trust). This image may be used for educational purposes only, any commercial use of this material requires the permission of the copyright holder.

URL : <http://www.ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/shakespeare/performance/details.do?performanceId=11449>

Figure 12. Royal Shakespeare Company, March 1991, Hands/O'Brien.

Donald Cooper: photographer. Rights: Donald Cooper. This image may be used for educational purposes only, any commercial use of this material requires the permission of the copyright holder.
 URL : <http://www.ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/shakespeare/imagetails.do?imageId=17335>

Figure 13. Royal Shakespeare Company, August 1973, Jones/O'Brien&Firth.

Tom Holte: photographer. Rights: Thos. F. and Mig Holte Collection (Copyright Shakespeare Birthplace Trust). This image may be used for educational purposes only, any commercial use of this material requires the permission of the copyright holder.
 URL: <http://www.ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/shakespeare/imagetails.do?imageId=15288>

Figure 14. Royal Shakespeare Company, Judge/Gunter, January 1995.

"Ferdinand," "Berowne," "Longaville," "Dumaine." URL: <http://www.ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/shakespeare/imagdetails.do?imageId=17355>

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Figure 15. Royal Shakespeare Company, Kyle/Crowley, August 1985.

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URL : <http://www.ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/shakespeare/imagdetails.do?imageId=17328>

Figure 16. National Theatre, 2003, Trevor Nunn, director.

Photograph: Tristram Kenton for the Guardian. Tristram Kenton/Guardian.

"Maria," "Princess of France," "Katherine." URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/apr/05/best-shakespeare-productions-loves-labours-lost>

Figure 17. Shakespeare & Company, 2013, Lisa Wolpe, director.

Photo by Kevin Sprague.

Kelly Galvin (Maria), Kate Abbruzzese (Katharine), Brooke Parks (Princess), Nafeesa Monroe (Rosaline). URL: http://www.shakespeare.org/gallery3/index.php/2013/Love-s-Labor-s-Lost/Love-s-Labor-s-Lost/LovesLaborsSCO13SPRA_0253

Figure 18. Seattle Shakespeare Company, 2013, Jon Kretzu, director.

Photo by John Ulman.

Kayla Lian as Rosaline and Paul Stuart as Berowne." URL: <http://www.seattleshakespeare.org/2012-2013-season/loves-labours-lost/loves-labours-lost-photos/#jp-carousel-3187>

Figure 19. Utah Shakespeare Company, 2013, Laura Gordon, director. Screen Grab.

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4IDI0xjmGLE>

- 28 And once again, the new 2014-15 Royal Shakespeare production in Stratford, England places the play in the “carefree elegance of a pre-war Edwardian summer” (evidently not “sweltering,” as in Trevor Nunn’s production). As the Director Christopher Luscombe says: “The idyllic, pastoral world of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, with tragedy waiting in the wings, seems particularly well suited to the fragile beauty of the last Edwardian

summer.”⁴² Dumaine holds the obligatory *Brideshead Revisited* teddy bear in one scene, intimations of Noel Coward float through the production, and Marcadé enters dressed as a World War I French field marshall. After what one thinks are the final songs, the music turns into a military tune, and the lords reenter, wearing WW1 brown British army uniforms, to stand at attention downstage. Military drums are heard while Armado pronounces the Mercury/Apollo line, and the lords click their heels and march out. A harmonica is sadly playing a military march. The lights fade away slowly on their military fate, which evidently is not to be reunited with the ladies as in Branagh's film.

- 29 Still, this RSC production concept seems to have preceded the director's involvement in the play, since, as Luscombe says, “RSC Artistic Director Gregory Doran wanted to commemorate the Great War, and suggested that I locate the plays [*Much Ado About Nothing* as well] either side of [the war].”⁴³ In a recent interview, Doran commented on the settings of the forthcoming productions of the two plays, and the reviewer perceptively asked, “a bit of a Downton [Abbey]?”⁴⁴ Indeed, Luscombe reports that:

For inspiration we chose a stately home that Shakespeare himself would have known – Charlecote Park close to Stratford, and where he was (allegedly) arrested for poaching as a young man. The actors were able to visit the house and start to conjure up the imagined community of Edwardian Warwickshire. For protocol expertise, we turned to Alastair Bruce, Equerry to the Earl of Wessex, and historical advisor on *Downton Abbey* and *The King's Speech*. His sessions with the company were a revelation.⁴⁵

Figure 20. Charlecote Park.

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URL: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charlecote_Park,_Warwick_\(3971634358\).jpg#/media/File:Charlecote_Park,_Warwick_\(3971634358\).jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charlecote_Park,_Warwick_(3971634358).jpg#/media/File:Charlecote_Park,_Warwick_(3971634358).jpg)

- 30 There's certainly nothing like a genuine Equerry to the Earl of Wessex to help authenticate an “imagined community,” not to mention the invocation of the false legend of Shakespeare's deer-poaching. And so we have yet another Edwardian production. Still, as the reference to the 2010 film *The King's Speech* indicates, they just

can't stay away from the 1930s and the advent of World War II. While it may seem that almost any war will do, or that the two World Wars can easily be collapsed together, certainly the Great War, World War I, remains the preferred period (fig. 21-22).

Figure 21. Royal Shakespeare Company, 2014, Christopher Luscombe, director.

Michelle Terry as Rosaline, Flora Spencer-Longhurst as Katherine, Leah Whitaker as Princess of France and Frances McNamee as Maria. URL: <http://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/loves-labours-lost/production-photos.aspx>

Photo by Manuel Harlan.

Figure 22. Royal Shakespeare Company, 2014, Christopher Luscombe, director.

John Hodgkinson as Don Armado, Nick Haverson as Costard, Chris McCalphy as Dull, Peter McGovern as Moth and Thomas Wheatley as Sir Nathaniel. URL: <http://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/loves-labours-lost/production-photos.aspx>

Photo by Manuel Harlan.

- 31 The “imagined community” of *Downton Abbey* or *Brideshead Revisited* or *Charlecote Park* represents a sentimental appeal to American and English audiences in particular. The Edwardian period is the embodiment of what is now called “heritage Shakespeare [...] a static and narrow conception of British history, national identity, and the national poet,” as recent critics have put it, a conception that marks the “stability of English national identity [...] as enshrined in the tourist industry and embodied in the national curriculum.”⁴⁶ Heritage Shakespeare imagines the past in terms of space and time as a pre-industrial, neo-pastoral Englishness – certainly not Welsh or, god forbid, Scottish. The typical setting is a grand country estate, far from the tedious coal mines, workers’ strikes, and immigrant suppression in the rest of the country (fig. 23-26).

Figure 23. Royal Shakespeare Company, 2014, Christopher Luscombe, director.

Photo by Manuel Harlan.

URL: <http://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/loves-labours-lost/production-photos.aspx>

Figure 24. Cast of *Downton Abbey*. Screen Grab.

URL: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/downtonabbey/season1.html>

Figure 25. Highclere Castle ("Downton Abbey").

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URL: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Highclere_Castle_\(April_2011\).jpg#/media/File:Highclere_Castle_\(April_2011\).jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Highclere_Castle_(April_2011).jpg#/media/File:Highclere_Castle_(April_2011).jpg)

Figure 26. Castle Howard (*Brideshead Revisited*).

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URL: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Castle_Howard.jpg#/media/File:Castle_Howard.jpg

- 32 It is a myopically utopian era marked by moral purity but unmarked by ethnicity or race, except to make fun of non-English foreigners, or class resentments, except to show loyal, solid servants. But the alleged innocent bliss of “the last Edwardian summer,” or the “fresh” and “relatively free of threatening external exigencies” 1930s, it seems to me, may also be seen as an instance, however benign, of what Renato Rosaldo has called “imperialist nostalgia,” a fantasy reimagining of an earlier time as a period of lost, or last, innocence, by which one’s own position of privilege or domination is concealed. The Downton Abbey/*Brideshead Revisited*/Charlecote Park positioning of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* in so many main-line English and anglophilic American productions both panders to belief in the alleged classlessness of current society and simultaneously constructs an ex post facto wisdom in which, as from on high, we the audience witness the doomed triviality of the lords and ladies and their language games. We should be especially alert, then, to how often the word or concept of “nostalgia” occurs in relation to these productions, and to the play itself.
- 33 Svetlana Boym has described nostalgia as “a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed,” a sentiment “of loss and displacement” which is “a romance with one’s own fantasy”; it “inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheaval,” and “outbreaks of nostalgia often follow revolutions.” Boym would no doubt categorize the war-nostalgic productions of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* as an instance of what she terms “restorative” nostalgia – a communal or national metanarrative that “attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home. [...] Restorative nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather of truth and tradition. [...] But in fact it] protects the absolute truth.” Such nostalgia is therefore a “defensive formation,” in Derek Hook’s words, “underscored by a fundamentally conservative impulse to resist any change to its regime of idealizing self-understandings.” Nostalgia is thus about the present or future, a mediation or protection against the anxieties and horrors of history – “history without the guilt,” as

Michael Kammen has put it. Thus the pre-war Edwardian period is one of “carefree elegance,” the “belle époque,” “innocence and care-freedom,” a “lost and elegant world,” a period of “lightheartedness,” “idyllic,” and “pastoral” in these accounts.

- 34 In other words, the Edwardian-nostalgic, pre- or post-war settings of *Love's Labour's Lost* precede from and reinforce, in a hermeneutic loop, a particular interpretive reading of the play that I am suggesting should be reconsidered. In this Edwardian/wartime reading, the play's incredibly inventive and energetic language games, its wit, its inspirations of desire, its satire of humanism's excesses, its recognition of the mingled threads of life, its subtle analysis of how the power of sublimation redirects anxieties and desires into art – in short, everything that makes the play the wonderful and challenging experience that it can be, is in effect dismissed as ‘unreal’ and ‘artificial’; only the death announced by Marcadé is considered ‘real.’ But surely this is an impoverished and limiting reading of the play. It is, moreover, a complacent account of the play from a false position of allegedly superior historical vision.
- 35 I do not mean to suggest that the productions I have mentioned are not *good* ones – indeed, I've seen many of them, and found many of them enchanting and provocative, the acting outstanding, and learned much about the play from them. Yet productions of *Love's Labour's Lost* in other countries, including some actually at war or during the Cold War, as I have briefly described elsewhere,⁴⁷ do not rely on this default historical moment. Certainly Corinne Jaber's production in Kabul, Afghanistan in 2005 and 2006, under extraordinarily dangerous war conditions, contrasts dramatically with the safely nostalgic Edwardian settings (fig. 27-28).

Figure 27. The play in the ruins of the Babur Garden, 2005, director Corinne Jaber.

Photograph courtesy of AP Images Tomas Munita.

Figure 28. The opening scene of the play, 2005, director Corinne Jaber.

Photo courtesy of Corinne Jaber.

- 36 Jaber's was the first production of a Shakespeare play since the Soviet invasion in 1979. Jaber observed in an interview that the Afghan actors did not want to do tragedies, after more than twenty years of war. The play's setting was changed from Navarre to Afghanistan, and Navarre was now the King of Kabul, and the ladies visited, not from the French court, but from Herat. The play's comic "masque of Muscovites" had to be transformed, given the still-fresh and painful memories of the Soviet invasion and occupation – to a masque of Indians, with slapstick Bollywood elements added to the play. The adapted playtext cut the elaborate comic subplots, and focused on the power of romantic love, finding striking analogies between the play and the current cultural situation: "the fact that four young men would retire to study and withdraw from the world in that kind of ascetic retreat [was] something that everybody could relate to," Jaber reported. And noting that the "whole play is about these women," Jaber quoted Berowne's speech in 4.3:

From women's eyes this doctrine I derive:
They sparkle still the right Promethean fire;
They are the books, the arts, the academes,
That show, contain, and nourish all the world. (4.3.319-22)

She then commented that it is "an extraordinary thing to say in a society where most of the time that's all you see of a woman ... her eyes. All this made so much sense and people could relate to it. This courtship [... is] like a hymn to women, which I felt was important."⁴⁸ Other productions of the play produced 1950-1989, in countries behind the Iron Curtain, have been equally different from the Edwardian-nostalgic productions in Britain and the US.

- 37 There is, finally, a striking difference between the Edwardian-period nostalgia of so many stage productions, and some recent films of Shakespeare's plays that have moved

toward more provocative settings and periodization: for example, Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet*, set in New York 2000, Julie Taymor's *Titus*, set both in the present and in an imagined blend of ancient Rome and fascist Italy, or Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*, set in a contemporary cross between Los Angeles and Mexico City. Films of Shakespeare's comedies have had some reinvention, as well, such as Josh Whedon's recent *Much Ado About Nothing*. And so, it's good to know, has *Love's Labour's Lost*, in the latest film by the Argentine director Matias Piñero entitled *The Princess of France*; Piñero has also remade *As You Like It* as *Rosalinda* (2010) and *Twelfth Night* as *Viola* (2012). Piñero's *The Princess of France* (fig. 29-30) centers on a young man who is staging a radio play based on *Love's Labour's Lost* while simultaneously trying to deal with his own love life.

Figure 29. Matias Piñero, *The Princess of France*, 2014 Trailer. Screen Grab.

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZ7ZceQeqHY>

Figure 30. Matias Piñero, *The Princess of France*, 2014 Trailer. Screen Grab.

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZ7ZceQeqHY>

- ³⁸ Following the death of his father, Victor returns to Buenos Aires from Mexico and attempts to revive his artistic pursuits, and to confront his prior romantic foibles. Snippets of Shakespearean text, often printed on screen, come not only from *Love's Labour's Lost* but other Shakespearean plays as well.⁴⁹ The former theatre company includes five women, and Victor's love life and the plot of the play begin to overlap. This film is not yet in general release, and it is an appropriation rather than a straightforward production of the play, but it is encouraging to see a truly new approach to the play. Piñero says in an interview that he attempts to respond to an "idea of acting or imagination that the Elizabethan theatre is asking for, or that Shakespeare is asking for. [...] I think that many of the representations of Shakespeare nowadays don't follow very well that statement: they try to present the plays as if they were realistic tales, which they are not."⁵⁰
- ³⁹ Thomas Mann, to return to my beginning, commented some years later on the diary passage that I began this article with, noting that "The Shakespeare play [...] falls within the magic circle – while around it sounds the uproar of the world" – that is, "the world that did not pertain to the novel."⁵¹ For him at least, it was possible to hold war and imaginative art simultaneously in mind, neither one cancelling or erasing the other. After all, *Love's Labour's Lost* ends not with a song of Winter, but with a song of Spring and a song of Winter, both songs mingling sadness and life's ongoing energy, in what Holofernes terms a "dialogue." A dialogue, of course, requires two sides to speak. We should remember Peter Brook's comment, that the play offers "an enigmatic coexistence of light and dark." If we forget that, and offer war as the only thing that is "real," then great things laboring will perish in their birth.

NOTES

1. This translation from Thomas Mann, *The Story of a Novel: The Genesis of 'Doctor Faustus'*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston, New York, Knopf, 1961, p. 28-9. For the original, see Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1940-1943*, ed. Peter de Mendelssohn, Frankfurt, S. Fischer, 1982, p. 577.
2. In the diary entry for 23 May 1943, Mann wrote "Begann vormittags 'Dr. Faust' zu schreiben. [...] Nach Tische 'Love's Labour Lost' [...] Abends wieder im Shakespeare. [...] Es sieht politisch furchtbar aus; baldiger militärischer Sieg ist verzweifelt nötig," *ibid.*, p. 579.
3. George Bernard Shaw, "Review of the Dramatic Students at St. James's Theatre," in *Love's Labour's Lost: Critical Essays*, ed. Felicia Hardison Londré, New York, Routledge, 1997, p. 346. Shaw was writing in 1886, but many current productions and critical essays still refer to the play in these terms: e.g., as "a great summer bon-bon" (in reference to Michael Langham's 1974 production at the Guthrie Theatre [Mike Steele, "Review," in Londré, *op. cit.*, p. 381]) or as offering "an elegant springtime world, potent as May and redolent of the innocent luxury of *Brideshead Revisited*" (in reference to a 1988 production at the Great Lakes Theater Festival [Marianne Evett, "Another Winner, A Feast Worthy of the Bard Himself," in Londré, *op. cit.*, p. 417]).
4. <http://tracking.wordfly.com/view/?sid=MTg0Xzk3MTRfNDcyNzg1XzY5OTE&l=cf607bb5-1634-e411-b26f-e41f1345a486>; accessed 9 October, 2014.
5. John Ezell, "On Designing *Love's Labour's Lost* – Twice," in Londré, *op. cit.*, p. 434.
6. Quotations from the play, hereafter cited in the text, are from *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. William C. Carroll, Cambridge, CUP, 2009.
7. See Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us*, Cambridge, CUP, 1935.
8. See the full discussions in Carroll, *op. cit.* (p. 27-29), Mary Ellen Lamb, "The Nature of Topicality in 'Love's Labour's Lost,'" *Shakespeare Survey* 38 (1985), 49-59; Paul Voss, *Elizabethan News Pamphlets* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001); and Gillian Woods, "Catholicism and Conversion in *Love's Labour's Lost*," in *How To Do Things with Shakespeare*, ed. Laurie Maguire, Malden, Blackwell, 2008, p. 101-130, among others.
9. Richard Wilson, "'Worthies away': The Scene Begins to Cloud in Shakespeare's Navarre," in Jean-Christophe Mayer, ed., *Representing France and the French in Early Modern English Drama*, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 2008, p. 104. Wilson, however, reads the play to its last detail, almost allegorically, as a response to Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*, positing an impossibly precise topicality.
10. Sir Walter Raleigh, *The History of the World* (London, 1614): "that worthie Gentleman, Count Lodowick of Nassau, brother to the late famous Prince of Orange, make the retrait at Moncountour with so great resolution, as hee saved the one halfe of the Protestant Armie, then broken and disbanded, of which my selfe was an eye-witnesse; and was one of them that had cause to thanke him for it" (5.2.8; p. 419).
11. See Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 55-7.
12. Quoted in Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1966, 1.435.
13. Peter Brook, *The Shifting Point: Theatre, Film, Opera 1946-1987*, New York, Harper & Row, 1987, p. 11.
14. Bobbyann Roesen [Anne Barton], "Love's Labour's Lost," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 4 (1953), p. 424.
15. This denigration of roughly 98% of the play's text stems in part from the conventional denigration of comedy as not a "serious" genre. Even John Dover Wilson's important conversion about the play's value on the stage, based on the 1932/1936 Tyrone Guthrie staging, was back-handed in its surprised praise, as Wilson came to realize "that for all its surface lightness and

frivolity, the play had behind it a serious mind at work, with a purpose," in *Shakespeare's Happy Comedies*, London, Faber & Faber, 1962, p.73.

16. Peter Brook, *The Quality of Mercy: Reflections on Shakespeare*, London, Nick Hern Books, 2013, p. 29-30, 95-6 (my emphasis).

17. James Hisao Kodama, "Armado's 'You That Way; We This Way,'" in Londré, *op. cit.*, p. 364.

18. Although a 1992 production at Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre set the play pretty specifically "around 1640," the production seems to have otherwise been much less specific, and no reason is given for that date, as opposed, say, to 1595 (Amy Reiter, "Continuous Sonnets," in Londré, *op. cit.*, p. 441).

19. Melia Bensussen, "Envoi," in Londré, *op. cit.*, p. 471-472. The production was at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, April 1994. The BBC Television version was directed by Elijah Moshinsky (1985).

20. A 1977 production of the play by the Alabama Shakespeare Festival had set the play precisely on April 10, 1932, and set it in the south of France, though no threatening war clouds were seen on the sunny Provençal horizon, in the "era of Noel Coward and Cole Porter." Carol McGinnis Kay, "The Alabama Shakespeare Festival," in *Shakespeare in the South*, ed. Philip Kolin, Jackson, UP of Mississippi, 1983, p. 251-252, 254.

21. *Production Program*, 1984-85 Season, American Repertory Theatre, p. 1, 12.

22. Russell Jackson, "Filming Shakespeare's Comedies: Reflections on *Love's Labour's Lost*," in *Shakespearean Performance: New Studies*, ed. Frank Occhiogrosso, Madison, N.J., Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2008, p. 71.

23. Quoted in Ramona Wray and Mark Thornton Burnett, "From the Horse's Mouth: Branagh on the Bard," in *Shakespeare, Film, Fin de Siècle*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000, p. 174.

24. Ramona Wray, "Nostalgia for Navarre: The Melancholic Metacinema of Kenneth Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost*," in *Shakespeare into Film*, eds. James M. Welsh *et al*, New York, Checkmark Books, 2002, p. 196; Katherine Eggert, "Sure Can Sing and Dance: Minstrelsy, the Star System, and the Post-Postcoloniality of Kenneth Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost* and Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night*," in *Shakespeare, The Movie II*, eds. Richard Burt and Lynda E. Boose, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 75.

25. Gerald Freedman, "On Directing *Love's Labour's Lost* – Five Times," in Londré, *op. cit.*, p. 428-429; Ezell, in Londré, *op. cit.* p. 434.

26. Wray, *op. cit.*, p. 197, notes the discrepancy in the headline, and comments that this "temporal breakdown stands as an overdetermined moment, robbing the decade of the distinctive identity" that the film "works so hard to establish elsewhere. [... This] chronological rupture introduces a notion of historical indeterminacy [...], it highlights the characteristically postmodern ways in which nostalgia is driven, not from a knowledge of or even a desire for the past, but from a fear or dislike of the present" (p. 198). But there is another example of the film's historical indeterminacy that Wray does not note, when Branagh shows a newspaper headline at 1:22:08 that reads "DEATH OF HIS MAJESTY THE KING," while a smaller-headlined story reads "Lord Gort Head of Field Force." Gort was appointed head of the British Expeditionary Force in September 1939, while George V died on 20 January 1936 – the film being drawn chronologically backwards in multiple ways. George V was the only king to die in office between Edward VII, who died on 6 May 1910, and George VI on 6 February 1952.

27. Ralph Berry, quoted in Miriam Gilbert, *Shakespeare in Performance: Love's Labour's Lost*, Manchester, Manchester UP, 1996, p. 118.

28. *Brideshead Revisited*, a novel by Evelyn Waugh published in 1945, follows the young aristocrat, Lord Sebastian Flyte and his friend Charles Ryder, from 1923-1943.

29. Sylvia Morris, "The Shakespeare Blog," <http://theshakespeareblog.com/2014/02/loves-labours-won/> (accessed October 21, 2014).

30. Peter Holland, *English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the English Stage in the 1990s* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), p. 176.
31. NT Education Workpack: *Love's Labour's Lost*, p. 5 (my emphasis); available online at <http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/document/love%E2%80%99s-labour%E2%80%99s-lost-education-pack> (accessed October 21, 2014). Joseph Fiennes, who played Berowne, like many actors, directors, and scholars, described the concept almost “as in a Turgenev or a Chekhov play. There is the threat of revolution looming behind the silver birches on the quiet estate. There is the allusion to war, and it's a theme which many of the characters refer [to] when they compare their affections or emotions to a battlefield” (p. 7).
32. John Peter, “Growing Pains,” *Sunday Times*: 19. Mar 02 2003 (<http://search.proquest.com/docview/316720005?accountid=9676>, accessed 5 March 2015).
33. NT Education Workpack: *Love's Labour's Lost*, p. 2.
34. Lizzie Loveridge, “*Love's Labour's Lost*,” *Curtain Up*, 25 February 2003; <http://www.curtainup.com/loveslabour2003.html>, accessed 23 October 2014.
35. NT Education Workpack: *Love's Labour's Lost*, *op. cit.*, p. 4. The production promptbook, in the National Theatre Archives, reads: “Rosaline & Berowne look at each other. B/O [i.e. Blackout].”
36. Peter, “Growing Pains,” *op. cit.* (<http://search.proquest.com/docview/316720005?accountid=9676>, accessed 5 March 2015).
37. Mark Shenton, “Trevor Nunn bids farewell,” *BBC News*, 23 February 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/2792487.stm>; accessed 21 October 2014.
38. Loveridge, “*Love's Labour's Lost*,” *op. cit.*
39. *Production Program*, Huntington Theatre Company, p. 19.
40. Benjamin Evett, “Director's Notes,” *Production Program*, The Actors' Shakespeare Project, p. 11 (my emphasis); Evett does not specify what the play is nostalgic for. Evett's stripped-down production, with a cast of six each taking multiple parts, was not set in any particular time period.
41. Dozens of similar images can easily be found of UK and US productions.
42. <http://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/loves-labours-lost/article-a-labour-of-love.aspx>, accessed 23 October 2014.
43. *Ibid.*
44. At the intermission of the RSC “Live From Stratford-upon-Avon” projection of their recent *Two Gentlemen of Verona* production; the broadcast was shown in the U.S. on 28 September 2014.
45. www.rsc.org.uk, *op. cit.*
46. Roberta E. Pearson and William Uricchio, “Brushing Up Shakespeare: Relevance and Televisual Form,” in Diana E. Henderson, ed., *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare on Screen*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2006, p. 199. See also Andrew Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema: Costume Drama since 1980*, Oxford, OUP, 2003.
47. See W.C. Carroll, “*Love's Labour's Lost* in Afghanistan”, *Shakespeare Bulletin* 28.4 (2010), 443–458.
48. . All quotations from and references to Jaber's production come from my “*Love's Labour's Lost* in Afghanistan”, *op. cit.*
49. Andrew Tracy reports that “The play's prologue ropes in the Chorus' opening oration from *Henry V*, while the epilogue spoken after the film's closing credits is that from Piñeiro's beloved *As You Like It*” (“Beautiful Games: Matías Piñeiro on The Princess of France,” *Cinema Scope Online*, <http://cinema-scope.com/cinema-scope-magazine/tiff-2014-princess-france-matias-pineiro-argentina-wavelengths/>, accessed 20 November 2014).
50. *Ibid.*
51. Mann, *The Story of a Novel*, *op. cit.*, p. 29, 28.

ABSTRACTS

This paper investigates the trope of war in relation to the critical and performance history of *Love's Labour's Lost*. The “civil war of wits” has long been recognized as central to the play’s linguistic texture, as has the “war against your own affections” that Navarre urges on his fellow academe-lovers. In addition to these linguistic and psychological threads, the play’s disputed debt between France and Navarre concerns the “wars” waged by Navarre’s father, while the four lords’ names point toward historical actors in the French wars of religion from the 1570s into the 1590s. Beyond these well-cited links, however, the play has an unusual history of being performed in actual war-time, or staged in a war-setting, as in Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus*, the Branagh film, and productions directed by Robin Phillips, Trevor Nunn and Corinne Jaber, among others. Publicity for the current RSC production describes the setting as just before the First World War, “conjuring up the carefree elegance of a pre-war Edwardian summer.” This paper explores why the play has so frequently been associated with war, and particularly the Edwardian period.

Cet article s’intéresse au trope de la guerre en relation à l’histoire de la critique et des mises en scène de *Peines d’amour perdues*. La « guerre civile » des beaux esprits est au cœur de la matière linguistique de la pièce, tout comme la « guerre » que doivent mener les hommes de Navarre contre leurs affections. Outre la dimension linguistique et psychologique, le conflit autour de la dette entre France et Navarre est un héritage des « guerres » menées par le père de Ferdinand et le nom des acolytes du roi renvoie à des protagonistes des guerres de religion en France dans les années 1570 à 1590. Au-delà de ces références bien connues, la pièce a souvent été jouée en période de guerre, ou mise en scène dans une ambiance de guerre : ainsi du *Docteur Faust* de Thomas Mann, du film de Kenneth Branagh et des mises en scène de Robin Phillips, Trevor Nunn et Corinne Jaber, entre autres. Les documents publicitaires relatifs à la mise en scène de la Royal Shakespeare Company qui se joue en ce moment indiquent que l’action se déroule immédiatement avant la Première Guerre Mondiale, « dans l’élégance insouciant du dernier été avant la guerre de l’Angleterre édouardienne ». L’association de *Peines d’amour perdues* à la guerre, et en particulier à la période édouardienne, sera traitée en détail.

INDEX

Mots-clés: Peines d’amour perdues, mise en scène, Première Guerre Mondiale, Seconde Guerre Mondiale

Keywords: Love’s Labour’s Lost, performance history, World War I, World War II

AUTHOR

WILLIAM C. CARROLL

Boston University