

Love's Labour's Won?

A Study on the relationship of William Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*



Katalin Fábri

English and American Drama and Film section, 2nd prize (shared), 2007

Abstract

In my paper I examine the close relationship between Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I intend to show that these two comedies are more than just similar to each other and that their relation needs to be described. After presenting the critics' notes on the similarities, I will deal with resemblance between them concerning the female characters, the same imageries built around them and the correspondence of traditions. In this essay I check five possible interpretations to describe the relationship between the two plays. Anatomizing the relationship between these two comedies, I will highlight the possible role a lost drama called *Love's Labour's Won* could have played.

Keywords

Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Won*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, similarities, relation analysis, female characters

I. Introduction

In this paper I will investigate and attempt to identify the relationship between two Shakespearean comedies: *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer*

Night's Dream. The topic is feasible due to a vast amount of critics who deal with either of these comedies, most mention the other drama as well. More specifically, I will exhibit what critics like Anne Barton, Blaze O. Bonazza, Harold F. Brooks, Géher István, Kéry László, Jan Kott, Mészöly Deszö, E. M. Tillyard and Robert Ornstein mention in connection with the similarities.

After regarding what has been stated in connection with the two plays by the critics, I provide my additional observations of the similarities that are echoed in both dramas, like the comic conventions and rites they share, whose significance lie in the fact that together they form a lifeline of love: first impressions, courting, being in a relationship, before wedding and married life.

In what follows I will deal with *Love's Labour's Won*, a supposedly lost Shakespearean comedy and although few data is available concerning this play, I believe these should be considered within this topic.

After this, I will point out that up till now, none of the famous Shakespeare scholars have explored, defined or even labelled the relationship between these two comedies by Shakespeare. I think that there is much more to these two dramas than having merely one or two similar characters, themes, parts or features. One needs to define in what way *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* relate to each other.

II. The critics' awareness of the relationship between *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

2.1 Recognition of partial similarities

Several critics find the two comedies to belong to one subgroup among Shakespeare's comedies. On resemblance of style and language they belong to a group of works created around the same time including the *Sonnets*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard II* (Barton, 1974 175). Northrop Frye thinks that concerning the plot, both comedies follow the Greek New Comedy (a young man who desires a woman, certain obstacles arise – mostly from the father – and by the end of the drama, through some kind of a twist, he is able to reach his goal, is united with the heroine and a new society is formed, which has the hero at its centre) (Frye 1998, 139-147). Frye also notes that both plays belong to a special category of Shakespearean comedies called “comedies of the green world.” The events of the comedy start in the normal world, then move to the

“green world,” where they go through a kind of metamorphosis, which leads to the comic resolution, and finally, they return to the normal world.

Most of the critics who report on any kind of relationship of *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reflect on their ‘maturity’, overwhelmingly remarking that *Love's Labour's Lost* is a weaker, less profound, “early comedy” and overall a less mature play than *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. They do so even though the two, most likely, had been created only months apart: Shakespeare wrote *Love's Labour's Lost* around 1594-1595 and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* around 1595-1596, after taking a trip to other genres. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* overall has received a better appreciation from the critics and was regarded as Shakespeare's first mature comedy.

This view of imbalance between the two plays has been supported for hundreds of years and has a tradition ever since Hazlitt and Dr. Johnson planted this seed in the critical approach of this comedy (Barton 1974, 174).

“If we were to part with any of the author's comedies it should be this,” wrote Hazlitt of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and his opinion was shared by most critics between Shakespeare's day and our own. (David 1956, xiii)

Tibor Fabiny in his *Számszimbolika a Lóvátett lovagokban* has showed that there are many levels of additional interpretations weaved deeply within this play, so it would be a mistake to dismiss it from the Shakespearean canon as immature and not worthy of the author. Anikó Oroszlán has presented the appreciation of *Love's Labour's Lost* in her article *Mikor víg a játék?* (Oroszlán, 2003, 23).

Most of the critics who report on a kind of similarity between *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* mention the play within the play scenes of the dramas. E. M. W. Tillyard claims that when the order of the pageant is considered in *Love's Labour's Lost* “one cannot help reflecting” on Theseus' case of previously not ordering the tragicomically clumsy play, which, as he says, “corresponds” to the pageant (Tillyard 1965, 148). Robert Ornstein reports on this as seeing this resemblance as a transformation with a direction of an improvement from one to the other: “Shakespeare will remember and redeem the fiasco of the pageant of the Worthies in the triumphant performance of “Pyramus and Thisbe” in the last scene of *A Dream*” (Ornstein 1986, 47).

Bonazza sees this resemblance as a kind of heritage: “Shakespeare even borrowed from himself: Bottom and His fellow actors trace their ancestry to Costard and the other Worthies of *Love's Labour's Lost*...” (Bonazza 1966, 116). László Kéry has a similar view on this ‘heritage’ as he claims the performance of the artisans has a prefiguration in Act V. in *Love's Labour's Lost* (Kéry 1964, 143). László Kéry is one of the few critics who deals with the similarities in

detail. He claims that the most striking resemblance of all is between the two play-within-the-play scenes. The tendency to forgive the companies for their poor acting and thinking of watching their performance as a noble deed is present in both comedies (Kéry 1964, 143).

Other scholars who have mentioned this similarity include Anikó Oroszlán in her article *Mikor víg a játék?*, Kenneth Muir in his *Shakespeare's Comic Sequence*, and Derek Traversi in his *Approach to Shakespeare*.

Other issues mentioned by the critics as being alike include the speeches of Puck and Berowne and the characters themselves, the masquerade of mixing lovers, the resemblance of Hermia and Rosaline and the appearance of the theme of death influencing the action of both plays.

Oroszlán reports on the resemblance of Berowne's asking the ladies' excuse for the lords' well intended but falsely turned out masquerade in *Love's Labour's Lost* to Puck's praise of the audience's appreciation of the play of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Oroszlán 2003, 23). István Géher made an even stronger point when he said Berowne himself is similar to Puck (Géher 1991, 121). On the resemblance between characters, Jan Kott recognized Rosaline in the character of Hermia (Kott 1970, 256). László Kéry spotted the mistaking and problematic, yet carnivalistic and quite funny mixing of the couples in both comedies (Kéry 1964, 143).

Charles L. Lyons recalls that in *Love's Labour's Lost* the theme of death overshadows and prolongs the happy ending with the uniting of the couples, just like the threat of this theme overshadows Hermia and Lysander's desired love (Lyons 1971, 35).

2.2 Recognition of the resemblance of the dramas themselves

All the above mentioned exhibits show that the vast majority of the scholars who recognize the similarity between *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* contribute to this issue only in terms of certain features: an interlude, a character, a monologue or an event. However, some critics claim that in some aspects the comedies themselves are similar.

Dezső Mészöly claims that from the play within the play scenes it is obvious that in *Love's Labour's Lost* Shakespeare was actually preparing for the improvement entitled *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Mészöly gives a kind of possible interpretation, when he thinks of the two plays as steps of an evolutionary procedure (Mészöly 1987, 487).

Both the Riverside and the Arden editions mention a strong connection between these two comedies of Shakespeare. Anne Barton writes in the introduction to *Love's Labour's Lost*:

Between *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, as might be expected, the connection is especially close. (Barton 1974, 175)

She lists affinities of style, linguistic exuberance and the wording of the comic convention as proofs (Barton 1974, 174-6).

In the introduction of the Arden Edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Harold F. Brooks mentions similarities of lyricism, purpose and occasion, forms of versification, amount of rhyming, songs, no known source, yet *A Midsummer Night's Dream* using *Love's Labour's Lost* as a source, the proverb "Jack shall have Jill" being reflected on at the end, and the perspective of seeing lovers as passionate lunatics (Brooks 1979, lxxvi). It also mentions G. K. Hunter's recognition of both comedies taking after Lylyan drama and C. L. Barber's perception of Shakespeare's beginning "to concentrate on constructive ideas drawn from festival" in these two plays.

The most relevant comments to the relationship of the two dramas include "... in important respects, the *Dream* is a successor of *Love's Labour's Lost*" and reports on the similarity of the *Dream* to other dramas:

I have found more parallels in the *Dream* with *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Romeo* than with any other plays. [...]

Unlike *The Comedy of Errors*, *the Shrew*, and *Two Gentlemen*, each [*Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*] derives its construction in part from Lyly's plan of relating to a central subject, such as might form a theme for disputation, a succession of episodes enacted by self-contained groups. (Brooks 1979, lxxvii)

Observing these marks and notes, the amount of similarities between *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* deserves attention.

III. Contributing to the list of resemblances with additional items and remarks

3.1 Similar female characters

The ladies of these comedies present an obvious case of similarity. The Princess of France resembles Helena in a way. When they are called beautiful, both take it as an offence and refuse compliments. Neither of them believes others

that she is beautiful. Both are thought to be delicate by others and mentioned to be light – skinned or white compared to their friends.

Similarly, Rosaline corresponds to Hermia. Both are referred to as dark. Both start a fight among women, when they are insulted and called dark. Both are of main importance. Rosaline plays a big part in the quarrels and she is the one who tells the lords that the ladies have seen through their games and knew what was going on. Hermia and her strong-willed personality is the reason for the initial problematic situation of the *Dream*.

The Princess of France can also be linked to Titania, the Queen of the Fairies. Both of them are in the highest position among the females and neither of them can be handled by their beloved man. All the other female protagonists are inferior to them.

Rosaline resembles Hippolyta for they are both mentioned in relation with Diana and torturing men. Diana was the Roman goddess of hunting and fertility. Shakespeare was familiar with ancient mythology and so was his audience, so he could use classical metaphors and imagery in his works as a means of analogy. Rosaline compares herself to a hunter, referring to Diana, and intends to torture Berowne. Hippolyta is the Queen of the Amazons. The Amazons, in Greek mythology, were a race of women warriors who worshipped Artemis, Diana's Greek equivalent (Kerényi 1997, 247). Both Rosaline and Hippolyta are mentioned to be servants or second highest in power.

3.2 Imagery and metaphors concerning the female characters

In both *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* all major female characters are mentioned in connection with Diana, the Greek goddess of hunting who represents female independence. Diana is mentioned by the Princess of France and Rosaline declares herself to be a hunter. Diana's other name is Titania, which identifies Shakespeare's Queen of the Fairies with the Greek goddess. Her servant on earth is Hippolyta, the Queen of the Amazons. Both titles "Fairy Queen" and "Diana" often referred to Queen Elizabeth I (Laroque 1993, 91-100).

In both comedies a light and a dark female character is mentioned and there is a great difference between them. This introduces us to the imagery of the day and night, and their great difference. The Summer Solstice, June 21, is the day of the year when the night is the shortest and the day is the longest, which happens to be around the Day of Midsummer, June 24.

Shakespeare creates an important image of midsummer night through the medium of stage iconography. While Hermia is short and dark - a

'minimus', an 'Ethiope' - Helena is tall and fair like a 'painted maypole'. As a pair, Hermia and Helena constitute an emblem of midsummer when the bright day is very long and the dark night is very short. The conflict between them reflects the battle of day and night, a battle which reaches its turning point at midsummer. (Wiles 1998, 76)

This emblem is also formed in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Here, it is the Princess of France who is called light and compared to Rosaline, who is dark.

If we look at the major female characters of these two plays we will find that Shakespeare halved his two most significant female protagonists of *Love's Labour's Lost* and thus made four of them in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He used the Princess of France as a source of Titania and Helena. Titania inherited the character of the most powerful female and Helena is just as light-skinned as the Princess of *Love's Labour's Lost*. At the making of Hippolyta and Hermia he turned to Rosaline as a muse. Hermia got the dark skin and Hippolyta got the position of the servant, who is the second most powerful of all the female characters.

3.3 Rites and traditions in the dramas

When we are dealing with any of Shakespeare's comedies, we have to be aware that they were strongly influenced by ancient and contemporary traditions and he often enriched his plays with rites, customs, myths, tales and emblems. I have already mentioned the emblem of midsummer implied in both dramas and Frye's theory on the comic tradition of the Greek New Comedy which they share.

Shakespeare employs a confusion of lovers very frequently in his comedies. Through this, he actually interweaves a contemporary English custom into these dramas: the mixing of the lovers is a Saint Valentine's Day tradition. This tradition is present in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* fully as David Wiles writes:

The game played on Saint Valentine's day whereby boy A chases girl B who chases boy C who chases girl D is startlingly analogous to the to the plot structure of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. (Wiles 1998, 72)

In *Love's Labour's Lost*, this tradition is present less completely. In the masque of Muscovites the lords get misled because the ladies have exchanged the gifts they received from their men, thus the lords court different ladies. However, this confused situation is not complete because these ladies and lords do not form real circles of love or love triangles. The actions of the lords are clearly

mistakes, as they have no intentions of changing their minds concerning the target of their affection, and when they notice the trick of the ladies they stand abashed and uncomprehending.

There are other features of the Saint Valentine's Day tradition in the two comedies. In *Love's Labour's Lost* Katherine receives a pair of gloves from Dumain. The custom of giving a present of money, or gloves is that of Saint Valentine's Day's. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the characteristic custom of this feast is "whereby one's 'Valentine' is the first person whom one sees when one wakes in the morning" (Wiles 1998, 72-73) for which Titania fell, due to the magic ointment on her eyes.

Another tradition that is present in both dramas is the festival of May Day. On this day the young got up early and went into the woods to bring back a tree to make it into a maypole. They painted and decorated it, and then they danced around it (Kéry 1964, 131). This tradition of going into the woods is present in *Love's Labour's Lost* two times, when the lords go to meet the ladies. The first time they go to the woods, they fall in love with the ladies - for the second time, they return to court them in a masquerade by night. The wood in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* gives place to magic and confusion, consequently, it is a natural realm of the fairies. Hermia and Lysander decide to elope from the harshness of law and go into the woods.

These three traditions can be understood as the three phases of selecting a partner, courting and marriage, which lovers go through.

The three festivals of Saint Valentine's Day, May Day and Midsummer are interwoven in the central, liminal portion of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, framed by the scene at court. They are not selected at random for they reflect symbolically three phases in the life cycle of a young person: mate selection, courtship and marriage. And this is the process through which the young aristocrats pass in the liminal, greenwood section of the play. (Wiles 1998, 76-77)

Although in *Love's Labour's Lost* all three traditions are present, the four couples only get to the second phase. The promise of a continuation of their relationship is vowed, nonetheless, the fulfilment of this promise is missing from the drama. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* presents cases after this phase.

3.4 The comic conventions worded in the dramas

The traditional ending of a comedy is worded in both dramas, implying self-realization of the genre. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ends properly, according

to the comic convention. As Puck steps out to ask the kind acceptance of their comedy by the audience, he concludes:

Puck. Jack shall have Jill,
Nought shall go ill;
The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well. (MND 3.2.
461-463)

On the contrary, *Love's Labour's Lost* lacks a satisfyingly happy ending. Berowne is the one who realizes that the end of their play does not suit the comic convention. When the ladies respond with flagging a possibility of access to their hands within a year, he notes that this solution is too long for a comedy.

Ber. Our wooing doth not end like an old play;
Jack hath not Jill: the ladies' courtesy
Might well have made our sport a comedy.
.....(LLL 5.2. 864-866)

Anne Barton reports on this, as "It is only by being for a little while lost that love's labour can eventually, and fully be won" (Barton 1974, 177). This could serve as a possible interpretation of the ending, nevertheless, there are certain facts that imply that in the end love's labour may be lost. Taking into consideration the title of the play, that the lords broke all the oaths they made, and the fact that Berowne notes that the offer the ladies made is too far, the prospects are not promising. The end of *Love's Labour's Lost* is actually open, but within the boundaries of the actual wording of the drama love's labour is not won yet.

IV. Why *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*? Why are these two dramas special?

What makes these two comedies stand out of all the other comedies? Why is this relationship more special than that of two other early Shakespearean comedies? Most of Shakespeare's comedies imply the feature of mixing lovers, hidden identities and all Shakespearean comedies feature love as a problematic issue. However, it is only these two comedies where the problematic love of *four* couples is at the centre of the play. Furthermore, no other comedies

could be joined together regarding the stages of the lifecycle of love: in *Love's Labour's Lost* all four couples are at the stage of making acquaintance with the other and courting, while the *Dream* presents all the stages of love after these two steps – Helena and Demetrius were once a couple, but they no longer are, Hermia and Lysander are fighting for their relationship to be acknowledged and plan to get married, Hippolyta and Theseus are just four days away from their wedding day, Oberon and Titania have been married for some time.

Other early dramas being featured in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the elements of several other plays are present. The mixing of the couples because one male protagonist changes his mind and falls for another lady has occurred already in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. A man struggling with his wife is the main theme of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Similarly, the eloping of two unaccepted lovers is a well-known event from *Romeo and Juliet*, which is actually parodied by the interlude of the artisans 'Pyramus and Thisbe' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. We can see that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is like a fusion pot of other earlier dramas of Shakespeare.

In fact, all these comedies, with the exception of *Love's Labour's Lost*, have identified literary sources (Barton 1974, 79-221). *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are indeed the first comedies of Shakespeare for which he did not turn to a piece of literature well-known at his time.

All these pieces of information show that Shakespeare probably interweaved his earlier works into *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Although the resemblances of certain parts, themes or events of these dramas to those of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are obvious, these resemblances are not as significant as the resemblance to *Love's Labour's Lost*. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* Proteus does abandon Julia for Sylvia and thus betray his friendship to Valentine, but the mixing of the couples is incomplete because Valentine does not fall in love with Julia. Unlike in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where Lysander and Demetrius first desire Hermia, then later, under a magic spell, both fall in love with Helena. And in *Love's Labour's Lost* we can again observe a complete rearrangement of the couples for a short while. The taming of Katherine by Petruchio could be compared to the fight between Titania and Oberon, but Oberon is only able to work his will upon his wife when she is under a spell. *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* is turned into "A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth" (5.1. 56-7) and apart from the elopement of the lovers because of the merciless father of the lady, the two works are apparently different. On the other hand, the close relation of *Love's Labour's Lost* to the *Dream* is astounding. I found that *Love's*

Labour's Lost is in closer relation to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* than any other known comedy written by Shakespeare.

V. The possible interpretations of the relationship

As we have seen there is an obvious resemblance between *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and this has been recognized to some extent. Harold F. Brooks in his introduction to the Arden edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* concludes that *Love's Labour's Lost* is the source of the *Dream*:

A detail which confirms that in the *Dream* Shakespeare recalled *Love's Labour's Lost* is Puck's affirmation of the proverb, 'Jack shall have Jill', surely not without recollection, on Shakespeare's part, of Berowne's 'Jack hath not Jill' (5.2.865). (Brooks 1979, lxxvii)

However, I have found other interpretations that describe the relationship as worthy of study: these understand the dramas to form a sequel or complete each other.

The basis of the relevance of the *Dream* being a sequel to *Love's Labour's Lost* is grounded on the fact that in Shakespeare's time it was usual to write sequels. Just to mention some examples that we know of, Thomas Kyd's famous *Spanish Tragedy* does not stand alone, as its subtitle *Hieronimo is mad* again suggests, which points out that this tragedy should be considered together with its antecedent, which, funnily enough, is a comedy entitled *Spanish Comedy*. Ben Jonson had also written twin dramas: *Every Man in his Humour* and *Every Man out of his Humour*. Thus it seems to be logical to consider Shakespeare having written a sequel or sequels too.

In the case of *Love's Labour's Lost* and the *Dream*, however, it is obvious there is no indication of one being a sequel to the other in the title and the characters have different names. Nevertheless, I think that the main theme of a problematic courting and pursuing love of the 4 couples in *Love's Labour's Lost* can complement the problematic relationships and marriages of the 4 couples in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I think that *Love's Labour's Lost* can serve as a sequel to the *Dream* in terms of the theme of problematic love and relationships at the stages of love's life-circle.

The possibility of these two dramas completing each other means that if you place the two beside each other, they will make more sense. In fact, together these two Shakespearean comedies have an additional, so called bonus

interpretation. They are independent comedies, but if we place the two side by side, we see that they are two halves of a new picture. If we read the two plays one after the other, what new message, point of view or interpretation do we get? Here we have to remember of the quote by David Wiles:

The three festivals of Saint Valentine's Day, May Day and Midsummer are interwoven in the central, liminal portion of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, framed by the scene at court. They are not selected at random for they reflect symbolically three phases in the life cycle of a young person: mate selection, courtship and marriage. And this is the process through which the young aristocrats pass in the liminal, greenwood section of the play. (Wiles 1998, 77-78)

I would extend his idea of the three customs drawing the lifeline of love completely presented by *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* together. Since, in order to have a complete lifeline we need to see the stage of courting from the very start: from the point when the two people meet, fall in love, exclaim that they are in love and decide to pursue their love, as we see in *Love's Labour's Lost*. I think that these stages are essential in the lifeline of love but to be completed, we need the stages of declaring the relationship in the face of all aridities, engagement and marriage, which we find in the *Dream*. As for the additional target of laughter, love is ridiculed at all ages and all stages. In my opinion the best possible interpretation is the comedies being interpreted together to see the complete lifeline of love unfolding.

VI. Love's Labour's Won: facts and significance

6.1 A lost comedy?

Love's Labour's Won is a play written by Shakespeare. There is not only evidence of its existence, but also of its reaching print. Francis Meres' mentioned it as an excellent comedy of Shakespeare and with a fragment of a bookseller's list around 1637-1638 also lists it among the sold items between 9 to 17 August 1603 in the south of England. We know of 500 to 1500 copies that were once in circulation. (Wells 1986, 349)

However, I only found three books that mention it and are available in Hungary. One of them is Philip Edwards' *Shakespeare – A writer's progress*.

Though Edwards only mentions the play once in the main body of his work and gives a few lines about it once in the table (Edwards, 1986, 97).

Stanley Wells supplies us with more information on this play in William Shakespeare: *The Complete Works*.

Taken together, Meres' reference in 1598 and the 1603 fragment appear to demonstrate that a play by Shakespeare called *Love's Labour's Won* had been performed by the time Meres wrote and was in print by August 1603. (Wells 1986, 349)

In his work Wells also mentions another lost play, *Cardenio*, and highlights that other plays have trouble with or have no complete first edition. Wells implies other crucial pieces of information on this play in this "brief account:"

Meres explicitly states, and the title implies, that it was a comedy. Its titular pairing with *Love's Labour's Lost* suggests that they may have been written at about the same time. Both Meres and the bookseller's catalogue place it after *Love's Labour's Lost*; although neither list is necessarily chronological, Meres' does otherwise agree with our own view of the order of composition of Shakespeare's comedies. (Wells 1986, 349)

In 2004, the *Essential Shakespeare Handbook's* Hungarian translation was published, and although it can only be categorized as tertiary literature, it is interesting because it provides an interpretation of its relationship with *Love's Labour's Lost*. It claims that *Love's Labour's Lost* was probably a two-piece play, of which *Love's Labour's Won* was the second part. In the second part the ladies may return and the lovers get married finally. (Dunton-Downer and Riding 2004, 156)

Taking into consideration all these pieces of information, my own interpretation is that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has evolved from *Love's Labour's Lost* and in this evolution *Love's Labour's Won* was a stage in this process. It is quite likely that Shakespeare first wrote his twin comedies *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Love's Labour's Won* and, possibly in a year's time, the *Dream*.

6.2. The role of *Love's Labour's Won*

If we rely on Meres' account, we can assume that *Love's Labour's Lost* was probably written first. Shakespeare wrote its sequel with an ending of love's labour being won after all, and he also made this alteration visible in the title

of this new comedy. Later, he returned to it and placing it into a different setting, he decided to turn it inside out and wrote its reflection. This is the comedy known today as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

On the other hand, if we give significance to the fact that the 1598 edition of *Love's Labour's Lost* is said to be 'Newly corrected and augmented', there is a chance that *Love's Labour's Won* was the title of the uncorrected version of it (Wells, 1986, 315). In this interpretation Shakespeare wrote *Love's Labour's Won*, then he corrected it and added an ending that does not satisfy the comic convention of his time. He returned to this play after a while and wrote its mirror image, the *Dream*.

Whatever version or interpretation we decide to take, several facts show that the relationship between *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is especially tight, the latter reflects on the first and the significance of *Love's Labour's Won* in this relation cannot be overlooked.

VII. Conclusion

In my investigation I tried to prove that the topic of analyzing the relationship between *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is one that is worth researching. I have surveyed a wide range of critical appreciation of this topic and added my observations to this list. In addition, I tried to give an answer to why I think these two comedies should be the subject of a comparison and why not other dramas.

I considered whether the relationship between these plays can be described as completion. It is true that *Love's Labour's Lost* is a source just as much as the others and its theme is obviously carried on in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. However, we get the complete picture if we place the two dramas beside each other in our mind and regard the additional meanings that these thus describe. The complete lifeline of love or a young lover: acquaintance, courting, wedding, marriage. The accumulative laughter, which is created by the constant returning of the 4 couples of the clumsy, fishy lovers. We could not be aware of these if we would not consider these two dramas together.

References

Primary Literature:

- Shakespeare, William. *Love's Labour's Lost*. in David, Richard, ed. *The Arden edition of the Works of William Shakespeare. Love's Labour's Lost*. London: Methuen, 1966
- Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. in Brooks, Harold F, ed. *The Arden edition of the Works of William Shakespeare. A Midsummer Night's Dream*. New York: Methuen, 1979

Secondary Literature:

- Barton, Anne. "The Comedy of Errors", "The Two Gentlemen of Verona", "The Taming of the Shrew", "Love's Labour's Lost" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream" in Evans, G. Blakemore, ed. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974
- Bonazza, Blaze O. *Shakespeare's Early Comedies*. London: Mouton, 1966
- Brooks, Harold F. *The Arden edition of the Works of William Shakespeare. A Midsummer Night's Dream*. New York: Methuen, 1979
- David, Richard. *The Arden edition of the Works of William Shakespeare. Love's Labour's Lost*. London: Methuen, 1966
- Edwards, Philip. *Shakespeare – A writer's progress*, Oxford: OUP, 1986
- Elton, W.R. "Shakespeare and the thought of his age" in Wells, Stanley, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*. Cambridge: CUP, 1986
- Frye, Northrop. *A kritika anatómiája*. Budapest: Helikon, 1998
- Géher, István. *Shakespeare olvasókönyve*. Budapest: Cserépfalvi Kiadó, 1991
- Kerényi, Károly. *Görög mitológia*. Szeged: Szukits Könyvkiadó, 1997
- Kéry, László. *Shakespeare vígjátékai*. Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 1964
- Kott, Jan. *Kortársunk Shakespeare*. Budapest: Gondolat, 1970
- Laroque, Francois. *Shakespeare, ahogy tetszik*. Budapest: Park Könyvkiadó, 1993
- Lyons, Charles R. *Shakespeare and the ambiguity of Love's Triumph*. The Hague: Mouton, 1971
- Mészöly, Dezső. *Betűk rabságában*. Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1987
- Ornstein, Robert. *Shakespeare's Comedies – From Roman Farce to Romantic Mystery*. Toronto: Associated University Press, 1986
- Oroszlán, Anikó. "Mikor víg a játék?" in Kiss Attila, ed. *Az értelmezés rejtett terei*. Budapest: Kijarat, 2003
- Wells, Stanley, ed. *Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1986

Wiles, David. *The Carnivalesque in A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Ronald Knowles, ed. *Shakespeare and Carnival*. London: Macmillan Press, 1998

Tertiary Literature:

Dunton-Downer, Leslie. *Shakespeare kézikönyv*. Budapest: Magyar Könyvklub, 2004