

“It Doth Forget to Do the Thing It Should”: Kenneth Branagh, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, and (Mis)Interpreting the Musical Genre



Since Kenneth Branagh impressed audiences in 1989 with his first film, *Henry V*, movie critics, film scholars, Shakespeare scholars, and Shakespeare enthusiasts alike have noticed two qualities about the young director: he holds back very little, and he borrows from other films quite a bit. Certain portions of his films have been defined appropriately as “lavish,” “over the top,” “energetic,” and “sheer bravura.” Some even say about Branagh, “He is not interested in making timid movies.”¹ At the same time, the director’s extravagant visions, sets, and camerawork are pieced together from other film genres, cinematographers, and *auteurs*—a style that places him alongside other notable postmodern filmmakers like David Lynch and Quentin Tarantino. Samuel Crowl effectively sums up this side of Kenneth Branagh:

Branagh is a product of the postmodern moment dominated by a sense of belatedness—a sense that originality is exhausted and that only parody and pastiche and intertextual echo remain. Rather than finding such a condition enervating, Branagh’s work seizes on its possibilities. Branagh is a reconstructionist—an artist who creates out of the bits and shards of the postmodern moment.²

Branagh’s insistence on “parody and pastiche” is unmistakable in his films: for example, his intertextual references to Laurence Olivier’s *Henry V* as the battle-hungry king, his homage to Welles and Hitchcock with his noirish thriller *Dead Again* (1991), and his tribute to John Sturges’s *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) in the opening shots of his comedy *Much Ado about Nothing*. However, this reconstructionist approach did not work for Branagh’s 2000 attempt at Shakespeare-on-screen, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.

Branagh’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost* has been criticized more for its tongue-in-cheek salute to the American film musical than praised for its creativity and good intentions. Critics often scoff at Branagh because of multiple (bad) decisions on his part: he edits too much of Shakespeare’s play, he casts actors who cannot dance or sing, he selects one of Shakespeare’s weakest and most language-rich plays to transfer to the screen, and (ever the postmodernist) he tries to pay homage to so many different films that every character seems to be acting in a different movie. For the most part, these are relatively obvious assessments of the film’s problem areas, and certainly plausible explanations as to why the film disappointed both the masses and the critics. Nonetheless, there are a couple of other potential reasons that the film failed to reach its audiences: it employs an outdated film genre—the classical Hollywood musical—for the retelling and adapting of a four-hundred-year-old Elizabethan play; moreover, the director misinterpreted the genre’s firmly established conventions and, more significant, the historical and social context that itself produced the musical’s conventions.³

Branagh’s pitch to the studios was to do “a Thirties musical-comedy, using material by Jerome Kern and George Gershwin.” The production notes likewise publicized the film as a Shakespearean play “seen through the lens of classic 1930’s Hollywood.” Even the cos-

tume and make-up designers for the film studied swimsuit and fur designs from the 1930s, copies of *Vogue* magazines from that same era, and the Astaire-Rogers films that spanned 1933 to 1938.⁴ So, if these are Branagh's intentions, then should we not look at his film with that particular mindset? In other words, should we not contrast *Love's Labour's Lost* to the type of films that he is mimicking? This kind of comparison seems much more practical than weighing it against something like Woody Allen's *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996) or even a more recent musical like *Chicago* (Rob Marshall, 2002). Like *Love's Labour's Lost*, Allen's film incorporates classic songs, but it does not purport to be an imitator of the studio musical or the era in which the studio musical existed. Similarly, placing Branagh's adaptation alongside musicals such as *Chicago* or *Moulin Rouge* (Baz Luhrmann, 2001) seems less useful as well since both of those have transformed the traditional musical genre into something "new" and ostensibly fresh.⁵

This essay, then, will examine *Love's Labour's Lost* alongside other classical Hollywood films like *Flying Down to Rio* (Thornton Freeland, 1933) and *Top Hat* (Mark Sandrich, 1935), and maintain that while there are surface similarities in the films' props (cocktails, suitcases, cigarettes); costumes (ties, top hats, tails); Berlin and Gershwin songs; soundstage settings; and (altered) happy endings, there are actually few structural or historical likenesses. Not only does Branagh omit three of the most important conventions of 1930's musical comedies—for example, constructing the screen personas of the lead stars, integrating the musical numbers into the narrative, and casting people who cannot sing and/or dance—the director also presumably fails to consider the temporal dimensions of these films and the strict censorship that regulated their sexual content. As a result of these decisions, the narrative is clumsy and difficult to understand.

Will Shakespeare's Text vs. Kenneth Branagh's Will

Scholars often consider *Love's Labour's Lost* to be one of Shakespeare's earliest plays, possibly written first for a boy's acting company in 1588 and later revised for Shakespeare's company in about 1596.⁶ A sophisticated comedy quite reminiscent of John Lyly's courtly dramas of the 1580's, *Love's Labour's Lost* begins with the King of Navarre and three of his lords—Berowne, Longaville, and Dumaine—assuming a three-year leave from their courtly duties so that they may engross themselves completely in the study of philosophy. During this time period, the four will deny all worldly pleasures, most significantly the company of women. But no sooner have they made their vows than the Princess of France and three of her ladies—Rosaline, Maria, and Katharine—arrive in the kingdom of Navarre to conduct courtly business on behalf of the Princess's bedridden and dying father, the King. As expected, one by one the men break their academic oaths and begin wooing the four women through songs and sonnets. The play concludes with the King of France's death and thus the ladies' departure, but before leaving, the four ladies assign each wooer a task and ask him to hold to that promise over a year's time. If the pledges are kept, then marriage can occur. As in most Shakespeare comedies, there is also a subplot in *Love's Labour's Lost*. This involves Don Armado, the Spaniard soldier who is desperately in love with Jaquenetta, a country wench; Costard, a clownish figure who misdirects letters among some of the lovers; and two comedic scholars, Nathaniel and Holofernes (changed to the lady Holofernia [Geraldine McEwan] for Branagh's film version).

According to Shakespeare scholars, *Love's Labour's Lost* is known to be one of the more, if not the most, "word conscious" of Shakespeare's plays. As David Bevington notes in his introduction to the play, instead of a fast-moving plot, Shakespeare employs verbal debates not only in his prose, but also in the puns, sonnets, and songs.⁷ It is because of these songs, as well as the in-text references to dancing and singing, that Branagh believed the play figuratively begged for a musical interpretation:

You know, in all of Shakespeare's plays there are songs, there are dances. He uses both devices absolutely consistently through all his plays. He uses it all the time in terms of, particularly, the love ritual. So I think the very idea of doing something that heavily involves music is Shakespearean in spirit.⁸

Branagh even told an interviewer at London's National Film Theatre that *Love's Labour's Lost* "has the kind of structure for a musical" and that when the characters "get to the point where there is no longer a need to speak, there is a requirement to sing."⁹ Despite the songs and dances within the text of the play, and the "Shakespearean spirit" of Branagh's idea, when one constructs a musical adaptation based on classical Hollywood musicals, one must *integrate* musical numbers into the story, not just insert them in the place of bits and pieces of text.

Reminiscent of the "News on the March" sequence in *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), *Love's Labour's Lost* begins on 1 September 1939, with images of newspaper clips, World War II planes, and black-and-white shots of Navarre's citizens; at the same time an off-camera narrator, Branagh himself (always the *auteur*), informs us of what will take place in the seemingly isolated kingdom of Navarre. Five of these newsreel montages are scattered throughout the film to update us on the goings-on among the four aristocratic couples, Costard's vaudevillian foolery, and Don Armado's wooing process. Although a nice touch for scene changes, the newsreels actually replace so much of the original text and storyline that it is hard to see an evolution in any of the relationships. Ironically, Branagh's textual editing—a considerable sixty-five to seventy-five percent of the play—mostly affects the development of his own character, Berowne, and his leading lady, Rosaline (Natascha McElhone).

The plots of classical Hollywood musicals are typically of little importance; rather, the parallel construction of the lead characters is what moves the narrative along.¹⁰ This is explicit in musicals like Charles Walters's *Summer Stock* (1950) in which the two lead characters, a New England farmer (Judy Garland) and the leader of an acting troupe (Gene Kelly), differ drastically in their ideas of work ethics, labor, and love: Garland's character (Jane) rises early to milk cows, effortlessly maneuvers the family tractor, betroths herself to the dependable (and uninteresting) boy-next-door, and deems the world of acting full of people who are "irresponsible, thoughtless, and destructive." Kelly's character (Joe), on the other hand, requires the loud blast of a rifle to wake him, fails in his task of gathering eggs, pledges himself to Jane's more worldly-wise sister, and regards the world of farming as "ridiculous." According to Rick Altman, the American film musical relies on this exact type of "dual-focus structure"; the narrative is situated around "parallel stars of opposite sex and radically divergent values," and the two main characters must at some point take on the characteristics of the other. In essence, as Altman writes, "everything becomes colored with the other person's actions and values." So, by the end of *Summer Stock*, Jane has become a successful actor, and Joe has decided to farm part-time. But Branagh does not take this dual-focus structure into account.¹¹

David Bevington remarks that "the greatest source of amusement" in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* is watching how the female characters constantly taunt and confuse the male characters.¹² We are supposed to see this most explicitly through Berowne and Rosaline, whose witty repartee is often understood to resemble Benedick's and Beatrice's from *Much Ado about Nothing*. Were we to consider Branagh's 1993 film version of the same name, we would find a solid characterization of Benedick (Branagh) and Beatrice (Emma Thompson). The onscreen pairing is unmistakable; the sexual tension between the two is evident when Thompson smirks or raises her eyebrow in disdain, and when Branagh's voice cracks or he stiffens his shoulders in disgust. They so loathe each other throughout the film that the audience knows they will end up together. Conversely, in Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost*, sometimes the only assurance we have that the characters belong to one another is their color-coordinated dresses and tuxedos. As well, in Branagh's musical comedy, nearly one hundred of Berowne's and Rosaline's bantering lines are omitted, and songs like "I Won't Dance, Don't Ask Me" are substituted in their place, so we never truly get the sense of the characters' repressed love and verbal wit. This also makes their final conversation in the film somewhat trivial when Rosaline challenges Berowne for one year to use his wit to "enforce the pained impotent to smile." First, we were unaware that this Berowne was *that* witty, and second, we are unsure why these two are making such intense promises to one



another since there is little tension or emotion onscreen to suggest otherwise. The character development becomes even more puzzling through the film's ten musical numbers.

In her article "Nostalgia for Navarre: The Melancholic Metacinema of Kenneth Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost*," Ramona Wray posits that the musical numbers in *Love's Labour's Lost* serve three purposes: they help us identify the romantic couples, they briefly delay the narrative with vignettes and interludes, and they help move the plot along.¹³ To this end, she believes that the music functions "as it would have done in its earlier Hollywood incarnation."¹⁴ And indeed, the couples *are* identified via the musical numbers; but this is, again, mainly because of their matching attire, not their onscreen chemistry or, as we shall see later, their compatible dance moves. As well, a couple of numbers do further the plot, most effectively Holofernia's song "The Way You Look Tonight," which replaces Don Armado's letter to Jaquenetta from act 4, and also "Let's Face the Music and Dance," which allows the four aristocratic women to exchange partners and trick their male suitors. But on the whole, the numbers do not drive the narrative; in fact, they seem wedged between the spoken lines either because they were Branagh's favorite songs or because similar words were found in Shakespeare's text.¹⁵

The music for the early Astaire-Rogers films was "commissioned, developed, and tailored" for both Astaire and Rogers.¹⁶ Therefore, there was a great "reduction of distance between narrative and number."¹⁷ This, of course, means that the couple's musical numbers, for the most part, were in themselves narrative, that the words and the dancing helped push the plot along. This type of union, however, is much more difficult to see in *Love's Labour's Lost*: first, because the numbers were not written for this film, and second, because they do not at all fit with Shakespeare's early modern English. One critic affirms this when he discusses how "jarring" it was "to watch the actors move from the complicated dialogue of the play to the memorable songs of Gershwin, Porter, and Berlin." And yet another writes that since the numbers failed to flow with the text, the film was "more like a review [revue] than an adaptation."¹⁸

The film's first musical number occurs in the library while the King of Navarre and his three young lords are debating whether or not to sign a contract that would allow no women in the court. As Berowne (Branagh) tries to persuade the others (Alessandro Nivola, Adrian Lester, and Matthew Lillard) that this is not such a good idea, they all four break into the song "I'd Rather Charleston." But unlike those opening numbers from earlier Hollywood musicals, nothing comes of this song and dance: the young men are about to sign their contract, Berowne tries to persuade them otherwise, the four sing and dance, and they still sign the contract. Nothing changes around the musical number, and there is little if any furtherance in the plot. If we contrast this with the opening scene from *Top Hat*, one of the films that most inspired Branagh, we find a much different scenario. Fred Astaire's character dances to the song "No Strings" and awakens Ginger Rogers's character from her sleep. This number allows the two to meet, to bicker for a few moments about Astaire's too-loud tap-dancing, and to set in place the fact that Astaire's character will fall for Rogers's. Again, the "I'd Rather Charleston" number in *Love's Labour's Lost* neither introduces nor accomplishes anything to this degree.



Another number that seems inserted just for fluff is Costard's (Nathan Lane) grand finale "There's No Business Like Show Business," in which we get a small tribute to backstage musicals like *Broadway Melody* (Harry Beaumont, 1929) and *42nd Street* (Lloyd Bacon, 1932). Although I think this is the most entertaining scene in the film—probably because Nathan Lane actually makes his living from singing and dancing—it does toy significantly with Shakespeare's text and thus changes parts of the secondary plot involving the Spanish soldier, Don Armado (Timothy Spall). In the play, Armado is a comedic character whose exaggerated actions and speech somewhat mirror those of the king and the three aristocratic lords; so Armado—who is in charge of the Pageant of the Nine Worthies—is supposed to become a sort of comic scapegoat so that the four young men can laugh about their former bravado (Bevington 33). In the film version, however, it is not Armado but Costard who stars in the Pageant with his leisurely version of "There's No Business Like Show Business." The song's tempo speeds up, the rest of Navarre joins him on stage, and they all look into the camera and perform specifically for us. Although containing high-angle shots, top shots, and remnants of those Busby Berkeley kaleidoscope numbers, this scene—much like the opening "I'd Rather Charleston" scene—seems forced. It does nothing to further the plot; actually, it changes the plot, and leaves us more confused about Armado's role in the narrative.

A musical number in *Love's Labour's Lost* that does somewhat further the narrative is the seventh one, "Let's Face the Music and Dance." Before this number, the four ladies (McElhone, Alicia Silverstone, Carmen Ejogo, and Emily Mortimer) have just received poems and gifts from their respectful lords. While displaying their gifts, the Princess and her lady Rosaline decide to play a trick on the men: the four women will wear masks and dress alike so that the men will not know which women they are wooing. Soon after the plot is set in motion, all eight characters enter the frame, all eight sing and dance, the men woo the wrong women, and the scheming is done. So in this regard, the plot does advance. There are, however, other problems with this scene, most specifically its sexual nature.

One of my first reactions to this segment filled with tight black pants, heaving cleavage, and yearning eyes was something to the effect of, why is it here? Although sex is alluded to in classical Hollywood musicals, it is done so *much* more subtly and discreetly, primarily because of the strictures of the Production Code: essentially, films were not to glorify adultery, seduction, or "scenes of passion" (for example, nudity, fondling, lustful kissing, compromising sexual positions); dancing costumes and the act of dancing itself were supposed to "remain within the limits of decency" so as not to arouse passions in the audience or suggest sexual actions (even excessive movement of women's breasts were scrutinized by those in the Hays office); and finally, "pure love" (such as heterosexual courtship that leads to marriage) was deemed supreme and, when possible, was expected to be substituted for sex.¹⁹ These parameters significantly shaped the American film musical: the act of sex and/or one's sexuality was relocated—primarily into bickering battles between the lead female and male characters—into the song and dance numbers themselves (the latter of which often resulted from the couple's fighting in the first place). To quote Rick Altman, "When you remove sex from a sex comedy, it has to go somewhere; [...] after 1934 sex appears on a different level—disguised, displaced, dislocated, but certainly not to be discounted."²⁰

Branagh, it seems, does not take this historical context into consideration with his *Love's Labour's Lost*. In effect, he is attempting to make a censored musical without the censorship.

Since obviously this Code no longer exists, Branagh can include in his film whatever he pleases; however, if one of his goals was to pay homage to and/or *recreate* the studio musicals, I ask again, why is it here? This repressed sexuality is to some extent evident in early musicals like *The Gay Divorcee* (Mark Sandrich, 1934), when after dancing to the song "Night and Day," Fred Astaire's character offers a cigarette to the reclining and rather post-coital-looking character of Ginger Rogers. Branagh picks up this same concept in his masked dance as all the girls huff on cigarettes after the number has ended. But quite *unlike* the early Astaire-Rogers films, and even some of the later more risqué dances of Cyd Charisse and Gene Kelly, in this dance scene we find a smoky, red room in which cameras zoom in on ample cleavages, women fumble about for men's crotches, and men lick women's legs that are wrapped in fishnet pantyhose. Although most likely intended to function as a consummation-type number—possibly similar to the Astaire-Rogers romantic dances like "Night and Day" and "Cheek to Cheek"—Branagh's "Let's Face the Music and Dance" does not fit any of the lightheartedness and overall chasteness of the first hour of the film.²¹ And it certainly does not correspond with the musical genre that Branagh is attempting to revive and/or imitate. In this case, it too is a number that seems out of place and therefore forced into being.

All-Talking, All-Singing, All-Dancing?

In one section of her book *The Hollywood Musical*, Jane Feuer comments that no matter how many times one watches Judy Garland's and Margaret O'Brien's cakewalk number in *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Vincente Minnelli, 1944), it always comes across as "natural and spontaneous."²² The same can be said for many scenes from classical Hollywood musicals, as the actors so often sing and dance in these supposed bursts of spontaneity. Such impulsiveness is perhaps even more evident in those musical numbers in which the actors use props, for example Fred Astaire's gymnasium routine in *Royal Wedding* (Stanley Donen, 1951) and Gene Kelly's squeaky board number in *Summer Stock*. In all of these scenes the audience has no doubt that Astaire and Kelly can sing and dance with anyone or anything, including a coat rack and an old newspaper. In fact, in many classical Hollywood musicals it is often difficult to know exactly when the characters stop narrating and actually begin singing and dancing, or as Altman explains, when they "move from diegetic conversation to diegetic song."²³

Again, most of the song and dance numbers in *Love's Labour's Lost* are abruptly inserted into the narrative, but there is one scene that stands out the most. There is actually no music involved, but it seems that Branagh is aiming for a similar move from dialogue to dance. After the four men have discovered that each of them broke his vow to abstain from female company, Berowne speaks the poetic line, "Have at you, then, Affection's men-at-arms." But as James Bowman notes in his review of the film, Berowne "pronounces this line with an exaggerated iambic pentameter (ti-TUM, ti-TUM, ti-TUM, ti-TUM, ti-TUM)" while he tap-dances the same rhythm on a platform in the King's library.²⁴ After Berowne's next line, "Consider what you first did swear unto," the three other scholars join him with their "singing" and tapping. Although they stop before breaking into song (which they will do in the next few minutes), it is significant to note that Branagh is indeed trying to pick up the "music" of Shakespeare's words here, but unfortunately, it translates as neither natural nor spontaneous.

Throughout the years, many have criticized both Fred Astaire's and Gene Kelly's singing performances; at the same time, I would assume that most of those critics steer clear of critiquing the men's dancing abilities. It appears that in studio and in some post-studio musicals, a leading lady or leading man could get by with having either one talent or the other. But could such a star have neither? With the exception of the characters of Dumaine (Adrian Lester) and Costard (Lane), this is what we find in Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost*—many actors with neither singing nor dancing talent.

Branagh says that he was aware that the actors he hired "weren't going to be Fred and Ginger, but as long as they were not tone deaf or physically uncoordinated, [he] took them at their word that they would work hard on the musical side."²⁵ I am sure there are various reasons why this attitude does not work when one fashions a musical, but the two I am most presently concerned with are how it conflicts with early Hollywood musicals and how it influences modern audiences.

One critic says that the cinematographer for *Love's Labour's Lost* "serves the actors by gliding the camera in a way that fools us into thinking we're seeing more movement than we are."²⁶ As this statement implies, the musical numbers in this film are, indeed, simple. The steps are deliberate and uncomplicated, the movements slight, and the dancers tense; as well, the music is sung in unison, and for the most part, the voices are strained. As Feuer might say, there is little "naturalness or spontaneity" involved. For instance, in the "Cheek to Cheek" number, after the four men have descended from the sky-colored dome of the library, all four couples meet in the courtyard to dance. It seems that this scene is supposed to parallel the Astaire-Rogers numbers the most, as the men are dressed in their hats, ties, and tails and the women accordingly in their long, flowing gowns. Nonetheless, the dancing in this scene is unnatural. At one point, the Princess runs into the frame and then jumps into the King's arms, with which he lifts her into the air and twirls her around. But rather than coming across as a polished Astaire-Rogers number, it is graceless and jerky. We just do not get that same assurance that we do with Astaire and Kelly—that these people can dance with anyone or anything. Even though we know we cannot sing and dance as well as they do, it does not matter. These films make us want to try—not so in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

The musical genre does not adapt as well as other genres like the western, for example, since for the most part, it "thrives on innocence and energy rather than irony and self-awareness"; to this end, Samuel Crowl proposes, the movie musical (except perhaps in the hands of Bob Fosse) "resists the postmodern aesthetic; [...] it refuses cynicism."²⁷ Were we to look at Kenneth Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost* with these notions in mind, we might conclude that the film was potentially doomed from its conception. However, had it been tailored to the audience that Branagh already *knows* how to capture (see *Henry V* and *Much Ado*), the adaptation might have succeeded.

Full-length, adult-oriented musicals—although potentially challenging—can still be achieved today.²⁸ In fact, popular backstage-type musicals like *The Bodyguard* (Mick Jackson, 1992) and *That Thing You Do* (Tom Hanks, 1996) both did quite well at the US box office. And as already mentioned, Rob Marshall's *Chicago* fascinated audiences and apparently many Academy voters in the summer of 2001 (the musical was nominated for thirteen Oscars; it won six).²⁹ Nonetheless, it is significant to note that these more recent and mostly successful musical films are fashioned differently from those in which Fred Astaire, Judy Garland, and Gene Kelly starred; they are *transformations* of the genre, in Rick Altman's terms. According to Altman, when a genre begins to fade, one may either shift it to a fresher or a more unsophisticated audience (like the Disney musicals), borrow the prestige of "higher" art forms (opera or ballet), or redirect the audience's beliefs about the film.³⁰ Kenneth Branagh, unfortunately, attempts none of the above with *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Directors like Branagh (and Woody Allen), who have for some reason latched on to the musical genre, may find it both creative and liberating to play with its format and to hire inexperienced singers and dancers for their films. Perhaps this makes their pictures less threatening for modern audiences or perhaps more fun for the actors themselves. But particularly in Branagh's case, the adaptation distances contemporary audiences not only from the 1930's studio musicals, but also from Shakespeare, which is unfortunate and ironic, because of the director's initial and well-meaning intentions to make the playwright understandable to today's audiences.

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Notes

¹ Janet Maslin, "More Things In 'Hamlet' Than Are Dreamt of in Other Adaptations," rev. of *Hamlet* (Castle Rock Entertainment), *New York Times* 25 Dec. 1996; James Berardinelli, rev. of *Dead Again* (Paramount Pictures), 2000 <<http://movie-reviews.colossus.net>>; Desson Howe, rev. of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (TriStar Pictures), *Washington Post* 4 Nov. 1994; Rick Groen, rev. of *Hamlet* (Castle Rock Entertainment), *The Globe and Mail* 24 Dec. 1996; Roger Ebert, rev. of *Dead Again* (Paramount), *Chicago Sun-Times* 23 Aug. 1991.

² Samuel Crowl, *Shakespeare in the Cineplex: The Kenneth Branagh Era* (Athens: Ohio UP, 2003) 28.

³ On editing, lack of singing/dancing talent, and Branagh's postmodernist methods, see the following film reviews of *Love's Labour's Lost* (Miramax): James Bowman, *American Spectator* July/Aug. 2000, 80-81; Stanley Kauffmann, *New Republic* 10 July 2000, 32-33; Kenneth Turan, *Los Angeles Times* 9 June 2000, F6; Richard Corliss, *Time* 12 June 2000, 82; David Jays, *New Statesman* 17 Apr. 2000, 45-46; Roger Ebert, *Chicago Sun-Times* 2000 (exact date not specified); Lisa Schwarzbaum, "Lower the Bard," *Entertainment Weekly* 9 June 2000, 50.

⁴ Belfast Telegraph, "Trust Kenneth Branagh," rev. of *Love's Labour's Lost* (Miramax), *Daily Telegiraffe* 22 Mar. 2000 <<http://members.tripod.com/~DailyTelegiraffe>>; "Studio Production Notes for *Love's Labour's Lost*," *The Daily Telegiraffe* (exact date not specified) <<http://members.tripod.com/DailyTelegiraffe/loveslaboursloststudionotes.html>>.

⁵ On genre transformation(s), see Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987) 251.

⁶ William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. David Bevington, 4th ed. (New York: Harper, 1992) 31-32.

⁷ Shakespeare 31.

⁸ Kenneth Branagh, "Kenneth Branagh: Making Love," interview at a Madrid Press Conference, *The Daily Telegiraffe* (exact date not specified) <<http://members.tripod.com/~DailyTelegiraffe>>.

⁹ Kenneth Branagh, "Guardian Interview of Kenneth Branagh at the National Film Theatre," interview with Michael Billington, *The Daily Telegiraffe* 23 May 1999 <<http://members.tripod.com/~DailyTelegiraffe>>.

¹⁰ Altman 200, 207.

¹¹ Altman 200-203.

¹² Bevington 33.

¹³ Ramona Wray, "Nostalgia for Navarre: The Melancholic Metacinema of Kenneth Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost*," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 30.3 (2002): 172.

¹⁴ Wray 172.

¹⁵ In an interview with Alex Gorina, *The Daily Telegiraffe* 4 Mar. 2000 <<http://members.tripod.com/~DailyTelegiraffe>>, Branagh explains that many of the songs he included in his musical were those he most adored from his childhood: "Well, [*Love's Labour's Lost*] was definitely intended to try to celebrate this form [...] you know, I tried to invest it with, you know, all my favourite bits from musicals of the past, across 30's, 40's and 50's and even 60's with Bob Fosse in there as well." Some of the songs also seem inserted just because their lyrics echo one or two of those from Shakespeare's text. For instance, before the musical number "I Won't Dance" Berowne asks Rosaline, "Did I not dance with you in Brabant once?" Also, directly before the four aristocratic lords (literally) fly upwards into the dome of the library and belt out "Cheek to Cheek," Berowne's speech talks of heaven (the first line of "Cheek to Cheek" is "Heaven, I'm in heaven ...").

¹⁶ Altman 167.

¹⁷ Altman 167.

¹⁸ See the following reviews of *Love's Labour's Lost* (Miramax) 2000: Max Messier, "Love's Labour's Lost," <<http://www.filmcritic.com>> 2000 (exact date not specified) <<http://www.filmcritic.com>>; Ebert, *Chicago Sun-Times*; Schwarzbaum 50.

¹⁹ Gerald Gardner, *The Censorship Papers: Movie Censorship Letters from the Hays Office, 1934-1968* (New York: Dodd, 1987). See Altman 168-77, for further discussion of sex within the early Astaire-Rogers pictures.

²⁰ Altman 167, 169.

²¹ For a brief discussion on the romantic dances of Astaire and Rogers, see Altman 163.

²² Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982) 14.

²³ Altman 67.

²⁴ Bowman 80-81.

²⁵ Kenneth Branagh, "The Bard of Belfast," interview with Michael Doherty, *The Daily Telegraph* (exact date not specified) <<http://members.tripod.com/~DailyTelegraffe>>.

²⁶ Charles Taylor, "The Player," review of *Love's Labour's Lost* (Miramax), *Salon.com* 9 June 2000 <<http://www.salon.com>>.

²⁷ Crowl, *Cineplex* 40.

²⁸ I single out adult-oriented musicals here because the more popular, more frequently made musicals are children's animated cartoons like *The Lion King* (1994) and *Prince of Egypt* (1998).

²⁹ Marc Miller, "Of Tunes and Toons: The Movie Musical in the 1990s," in *Film Genre 2000: New Critical Essays*, ed. Wheeler Winston Dixon (New York: State U of New York P, 2000) 46-55.

³⁰ Altman 251.

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